Name

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**Role of a change agent in re-framing the organization**

Introduction

Change management is the structural approach adopted to transform an organization from its current state to the desired state. These transformation efforts must be clearly led by a certain set of goals and objectives. Effective change management is the critical part of any business organization and it is dependent on the involvement of change agent. Change management is aimed at reframing the change in the organization. According to Bolam, change initiatives fail because the employees lack the knowledge and as a result, they show resistance to change (Bolman and Deal, 359). The most logical approach companies can adopt is to hire a change agent to avoid any issues and hindrances in the way of effective change management. This paper seeks to highlight the importance and role of a change agent in reframing the organization and its change process.

Role of change agent

A change agent is an individual in an organization who promotes a new way of doing things. This may include the adoption of a new process, a new management structure of the transformation of the business model. Change agents are focused on matters of organizational improvement, effectiveness, and development. Some of the common characteristics of change agents include critical communication skills, writing, and speaking skills. A change agent promotes credibility among other stakeholders (*Change\_Agent\_Skills\_and\_Resources.Pdf*). Change agent plays a vital role in the re-framing and re-structuring organization and therefore it requires to have a specialized person as a change agent.

The role of a change agent usually varies from organization to organization and it also depends on the nature of management and problems in an organization. A change process is mostly initiated by the change agent who announces the need for re-framing, or re-structuring things to reduce the impacts of current issues in the organization. After the need is announced, the job of a change agent is to help others overcome the resistance to change by effectively communicating the outcomes of the change process. He is responsible to smoothly carrying the change process in an organization and formulate strategies that help others to adopt the change without feeling that change Is imposed on them.

Usually, when a change or transformation is introduced in an organization it affects all the dimensions of it. These dimensions can be technical, conceptual, or related to humans. Here comes the role of a change agent, change efforts usually face fear because the change agents often operate with a limited perspective. They use just one of two lenses and often fail to anticipate the consequences of their actions. The organizational change is re-framed into four dimensions by the author Bolam in his book (Bolman and Deal, 361). These four dimensions include structural perspective, human resource perspective, political perspective, and symbolic perspective. The change agent needs to put the focus on all three dimensions to ensure the success of a change process.

From the structural perspective, change disrupts the formal structure or system of an organization. It requires the organizational systems and sometimes the whole departments to be redefined. The organization needs a clear line of communication and realignment of structural elements. The change agent can play his/her role in this regard. They have exceptional communication skills and communicates the need for change, and its better outcomes to all the stakeholders involved in an effective manner. A change agent is able to communicate the ideas clearly, precisely and concisely, verbally and in written as well. With respect to the human resource perspective, change destabilizes the individual skills. Organizations need to provide training to their employees to help the developing understanding of the basic skills needed for change implementation. Along with that, organizations need to provide support to assist them to deal with the changing disturbances. A change agent helps people developing the necessary skills when a change process is implemented.

When the change process begins, arising from conflicts is an essential part. A change always creates losers and winners, few parties are benefited due to change while the other ones are disrupted. A change agent must solve issues and reach shared agreements in order to reduce the conflicts and their impacts on the change process. The change agent can help in the creation of arenas to reduce the impact of these disruptions and for conflict management. From the symbolic perspective, change results in the trouble of symbols, meanings, and attachments of two responses, either moving onto future or hold on to the past practices. At this point, the human transition from the past to future is important and this transition is essential to promote an organizational change. A change agent can apply their skills, envision, and create a positive image of the outcome of the change to promote change management. They are able to tolerate ambiguity to cope effectively with the team and can assist other organizational members in doing so.

Companies excel at bringing change in an organization but the need of right personnel holds a very high significance. Most of the organizations use an internal source as the champion; however, this notion is far away from the ideal one. For the positive success of change in an organization, that the change agent selection is given high attention. The power of a change agent must be used to reinforce the right direction of the organization. An outsider as a change agent brings the new fresh perspectives to the organization.

Change Agents play three distinct roles according to a study, which can be performed by the managers and the outside change agents as well. A change agent can be a consultant to organizational managers assisting them in collecting data from within the organization and helping employees in problem-solving (Lunenburg, 3). A change agent can also be a trainer to employees who guides the members of the organization in making the right use of data to affect change. It can act as a trainer in two ways, firstly it can guide in taking action based on the current data, and secondly, it can provide members of an organization with the needed skill set in order to use and translate data to solve future problems. A change agent can also assume the role of a researcher, who helps the organizational members in evaluating the impacts of their actions being implemented. They can also design an evaluation component that can assist in solving current and future problems as well.

Studies reveal the characteristics of an effective change agent, whether internal or external. One of those characteristics is homophily, which refers to the similarity between the change agent and the organizational members. The higher the similarity, the greater the chance of understanding. The second characteristic is empathy, understanding the feelings of others. It also boosts understanding and communication between the employees and change agent. The third characteristic is the linkage between both the parties, change agent and members of the organization. It enhances the collaborative efforts and reduces the likelihood of failure of the change process.

An effective change agent is the one who takes and manages risk. Risk taking is one of the most important traits of a change agent. They must be a planner to plan and manages risk, because the risk is an essential part of the change process, sometimes the element of risk is highly involved in the change process. Change without risk-taking is not an option and careful planning of risks in the change process are essential to protect the project or organization from failure.

The success of a change process is highly dependent on the change agent. The qualities and characteristics of a change agent boost the change process and remove any hindrances in the successful implementation of the change process. Some other traits of a change agent that are the proximity, which is the measure of the closeness of the change agent with the organizational processes and its members (Lunenburg, 4). The greater the proximity, the higher is the ability of change agent to influence the change process. In addition, an effective change manager has the qualities of planning and organizing the change process. A change effort requires the effective use of resources, and the change agents are known for the effective utilization of organizational resources to boost the change process and enhance the positive outcomes of it.

The change process also depends on the degree to which the change agent is willing to hear to the other members. This characteristic of change agent is referred to as openness and a change agent must be ready to hear the opinions of others. A change agent also exerts his/her physical and psychological efforts to solve all the day to day problems related to the change process. The skills and abilities of a change agent assist everyone in the organization to deal with the hurdles of the change process and enhances the process of re-framing of an organization. The expert change agents stay focused on their goals and organizational objectives and influence outcome while being flexible and empathetic.

The behavioral skills of a change agent help employees and the organizational members to deal with any emotional and social issues associated with the acceptance of the change. A change agent is not a change manager and his/her role in the re-framing organization is to act as a facilitator, counselor, and consultant. He is the biggest facilitator of the change process, who plans and make strategies to manage change effectively, and also studies the personalities and attitude of people involved in change and motivates them to accept change. One of the greatest challenges for a change agent is to deal with the change if the company has always been successful, the resistance to change is relatively higher in such cases.

Therefore, a change agent needs to have leadership skills to boost his/her influence on the change process. In order to deal with the employee response and resistance to change, the change agent must implement different theories and train employees (“Roles of Change Agent”). In addition, external change agents must also train internal change agents to make change an on-going process owing to the ever-changing nature of business organizations in response to market and customers’ demands. Furthermore, a change agent has to act as a follower where necessary.

Conclusion

To sum up, change is an inevitable part of any organization, whether large or small. An effective change process needs one or more change agents to carry the process of change in an effective manner. A change agent is the one having all the necessary skills and expertise required for the smooth flow of activities when it comes to re-framing or transforming an organization. Change agents can be internal or external, however, in both the cases they play the same role, smooth functioning of the change process in an organization. The success of a change process relies heavily on the skills and abilities of a change agent and the relationship he/she develops with the organizational members and key decision makers in the organization.

Works Cited

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