

Case Study: Resistance to Change
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Abstract

When an organization fails to present compelling goals, ignores the strength of a culture, and does not communicate the rationale behind a change, it can meet with resistance to change. There

are some strategies organizations can follow in order to gain commitment and support. Leaders who communicate the vision in a way that followers will perceive the sacrifices and hardships will be worthy will have more chances to achieve commitment. The use of persuasive approaches, participation and involvement strategies, and facilitation and support actions can also help leaders to gain commitment and facilitate the process of change. Additionally, it is important that all people involved in the process can understand the rationale behind the change. Leaders also need to recognize the strength of an old culture and present changes according to the reality of the organization. This paper discusses a change program in a business school in

Northern Europe, which failed owing to opposition to change.

Keywords: change program, commitment, strategies, process

Case Study: Resistance to change

This paper aims to discuss the case study *Resistance to change* (Hodges & Gill, 2015 pp.313-315) by examining the lessons learnt with regards to resistance to change. The case study illustrates a change program in a business school in Northern Europe, which failed owing to

opposition to change. Yukl (2013) states that one of the most challenging responsibilities in leadership is to guide and facilitate the implementation of a change. In *Resistance to change*, the reader learns that the new director was welcomed with resistance as she did not realize that putting the theory of change into practice could be more challenging because of the people involved in the change process. Next, the paper examines the possible reasons for the resistance to change from the executive education team.

Reasons for the Resistance to the Change

According to Nelson and Quick (2012), despite the attempts to minimize the resistance to change in an organization, some reactions to change are unavoidable. In *Resistance to change*, the reader learns that the executive education team had worked on their own and done what they wanted for a long period of time. Although the new director asked for stakeholders' feedback, he failed to present them with compelling goals. Hodges and Gill (2015) state that when individuals visualize compelling goals, they can set priorities. Additionally, the reader learns that the new director did not count on ongoing support from senior management. The program manager, for instance, convinced those around her that the change would not work; she was fighting for her status and control of power. People refused to contemplate change as they did not fully know what the change was about. Nelson and Quick (2012) argue that people need to understand the rationale behind the change. Finally, the new director did not realize how strong an old culture could be. Next, the paper discusses what strategies the new director should have used in order to gain commitment to the proposed changes and to what extent the strategy to transform the programs was a step too far.

Gaining Commitment and the Strategy

Hodges and Gill (2015) propose some approaches to change. One of the approaches refers to the ability leaders and managers have to persuade people to change by appealing to their emotions through passionate arguments. The authors argue that “persuasive approaches can increase commitment by stressing either the benefits of changing or the costs of not changing” (p. 316). Participation and involvement are also vital in the change process. Hodges and Gill (2015) state that when people are involved in the change process, they feel they are helping create something new. Yukl (2013) argues that leaders who communicate the vision in a way that followers will perceive the sacrifices and hardships will be worthy as they will achieve a better future will have more chances to achieve commitment. The author explains that there are some desirable characteristics for a vision that generates commitment: 1) a vision needs to be meaningful; 2) a vision should address the ideals, needs, values and hopes of organization members and stakeholders; 3) a vision should allow initiative and creativity and 4) a vision should be communicated in a simple and clear way. Yukl (2013) also affirms that “to be inspiring, the vision must include strong ideological content that appeals to organization members’ shared values and ideals concerning customers, employees, and the mission of the organization” (p.101). Another approach, according to Hodges and Gill (2015), refers to the ability leaders have to offer facilitation and support. The authors state that the provision of emotional support can have effective results because it helps people to think clearly about the change process. Provision of training in new skills can also help leaders facilitate the process of change and gain commitment. The strategy to transform the Executive Education programs was too transformational for the culture. Although there was an urgent need to do things differently, the new director should have recognized the strength of a culture and how important it is to use

different strategies to challenge the status quo. Because the stakeholders were not fully educated about the change, the strategy met with great resistance.

Final Considerations

This paper aimed to discuss the case study *Resistance to change* (Hodges & Gill, 2015 pp.313-315) by examining the lessons learnt with regards to resistance to change. This paper discussed the reasons why the new director met with resistance and what she should do in order to gain commitment. The use of persuasive approaches, participation and involvement strategies, and facilitation and support actions can help leaders to gain commitment and facilitate the process of change. Additionally, it is important that all people involved in the process can understand the rationale behind the change. Leaders also need to recognize the strength of an old culture and present changes according to the reality of the organization. This author wants to investigate when transformational approaches to change can be beneficial to the organization and how organizational culture plays a significant role in what strategies one should choose in order to gain commitment and implement a change.

References

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