

**MANAGING ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE IN HUMAN WORK  
ENVIRONMENT IN NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT:**

*It has almost become right to say that, the only constant thing about today's world (and therefore our organizations) is that things are constantly changing. In reality, management does not have the option of not changing. Thus, we must be cognizant of ways to promote and respond to change to ensure the survival of our organizations. In line with the above, this paper X-rayed the change process, external and internal change forces, ways of overcoming resistance to change, interest of Nigerian executives in the change process, strategies for implementing corporate change, techniques for successful implementation of change, failure of organizational change, the change agents, and a comparative analysis of Nigeria and Japan corporate Profiles. The paper believed that to contain change, Nigerian Organizations must develop managerial confidence and capability to sense, articulate and implement it.*

**INTRODUCTION**

A change is any deviation from a normal situation which in management requires special skills. There is nothing as certain as change: managing change is a persistent challenge which must be met in order to promote progressive organizational performance. Accordingly, Jolaoso (1991) personnel management skill should involve

the whole range of management tasks including planning, operating, controlling, management, development, communicating, bargaining etc.

Rao and Rao (1997) define organizational change as the creation of imbalances in the existent pattern or situation. This requires adjustments in management skill for favourable organizational results. People adjust with their jobs, working conditions, colleagues, superiors etc. Abba, Anazado and Okoye (2004) defined organizational change as the ability of an organization to adapt it self to various variables that are facing it in a given period of time in the changing environment. Such variables include demands of employees and customers, market forces, economic conditions and government regulations. The ability of organization to successfully adapt itself to a changing environment is a primary characteristic of organizational effectiveness. Inyang (2004) defined Change as any modification or alteration of the status quo and which sometimes results in resistance from those who are encountering the change, he further defines organizational change as an alteration in people structure or technology. Planned change according to Stoner et al (2007) is the deliberate design and implementation of a structural innovation, a new policy or goal or a change in operating philosophy, climate or style.

Change implies transforming or passing from one form to another, a significant and basic alteration or mutation. It is an organizational response to some exogenous or endogenous threat or opportunity to business and economic events to processes of managerial perception, choice and actions or to other catalyze influence, Osisioma (2004).

Organizational change experts according to Inyang (2004) are in apparent agreement that managing change or transformation requires changing the behaviour of employees. Such behaviour which must be managed in implementing a corporate transition are:-

- Dissatisfaction with the status quo among employees who must change their behaviour.
- The need for model or vision of the future which will guide the redesign of the organization.

- The need for a well-managed process of change to help employee modify their attitude and behaviour.

Planned organizational change has several qualities which differentiate it from specific techniques of organizational change. Qualities of planned organizational change are as follows:-

- a) It focuses on a whole organizational unit (workshop, department, division or the entire organization)
- b) It is based on behavioural science knowledge of both micro and macro levels.
- c) It involves the creation and reinforcement of managed organizational change.
- d) It uses strategy, structure and process change in the organization.
- e) It has the primary goal of improving organizational effectiveness, (Inyang 2004 in Oyeleye, 1998).

Ejiofor in Osisoma (2004) emphasized that the challenge facing organizations is not to avoid change and attain a state of changelessness. It is to manage change that is seeking change, initiate it, and keeps looking for something new to do. Something old to discard and do all these with minimum disruption of the status quo, thus attaining a state of profitable dynamic equilibrium. Organizations that do not change are forced to change from existence to non-existence. According to Lawler and Worley (2008), in today's rapidly evolving business climate, building an organization which can change rapidly, is valued more highly.

It is on this premise that the problem of this paper borders on how to embrace and manage organizational change for effective management of human and material resources for optimum results.

### **THE CHANGE PROCESS**

The change process is inevitable because of technological and social development and one way whereby one can determine effectiveness of an executive is his ability to create and or manage a change process. The rational change process suggests the following steps in bringing about change (Jolaoso, 1991).

- i) Problem definition
- ii) Data collection around the problem

- iii) Problem diagnosis
- iv) Suggestion of credible options
- v) Making a decision
- vi) Making an alternative decision
- vii) Action implementation.

Scientifically, the model may work well with many simple technical problems, but it is not likely to work well with organizational change. This is because organizational change invariably involves people and it is people who resist change. We know that much of the resistance to effecting a change is a response to the uncertainty that accompanies a change process.

Any organization change effort has to energize people around something that they typically do not want to do and has to anticipate the obstacles in the way.

## **EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL CHANGE FORCES**

Forces for change in organizations can basically be grouped into two broad categories: External and Internal Forces in (Abaa, Anazado, Okoye, 2004)

### **A) External Forces**

1. Changes in economic market conditions such as sudden decline in demand for a company's products.
2. Changes product or manufacturing process by a competitor.
3. Changes in the legal or political situation such as a new consumer protection law that affects current products or practices and
4. Changes in resource availability, such as an increase in cost or sudden unavailability of a major input such as oil:

There are many forces for change in the external environment, but the prominent forces are computer technology, global and local competition and demographics. Others include changes in economic market etc.

### **B) Internal Forces**

The forces for change occurring within the organization can be faced by processes and people. Process forces include decision making, communications and interpersonal relations.

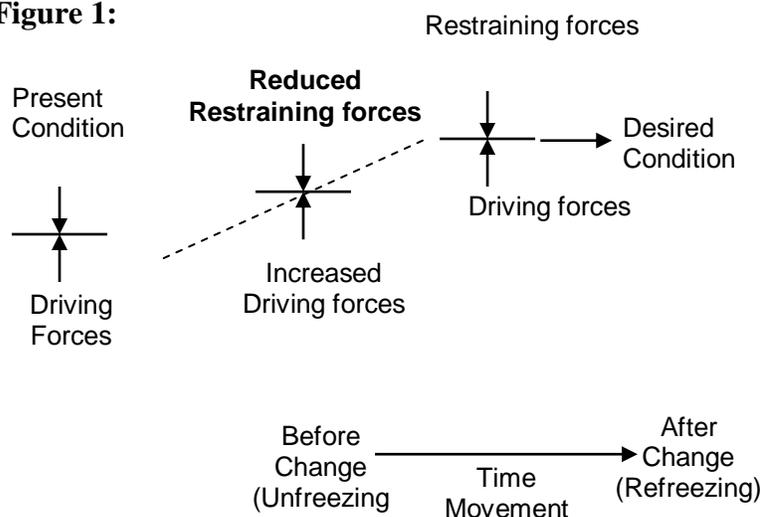
1. Changes in the composition or personal goals of employees. Such as hiring of newer or younger employees with a work ethic different from that of more senior employees.
2. Changes in job technology such as replacement of craft-type jobs by automated equipment.
3. Changes in organizational structure such as new divisions necessitated by company growth.
4. Changes in organizational climate such as creation of a climate of distrust, hostility and insecurity as a result of mass layoffs and insecurity as a result of mass layoffs and
5. Changes in organizational goals such as those caused by goal succession.

These forces, described above create unstable conditions within organizations and jeopardize goal directed efforts. Breakdowns of problems in any of these processes can create forces for change. Decisions are either not being made, are made too late or are of poor quality. Communications are short-circuited, redundant or simply inadequate. Tasks are not undertaken or not completed because the person responsible did not get the word.

Low levels of morale and high level of absenteeism and turnover are symptoms of people problems that must be followed-up.

### ELEMENTS OF A CHANGE MODEL

**Figure 1:**



**Source Lewin's Force Field Analysis Model, in Amah (2006), P. 74.**

Force-field analysis model of Lewin (1947) in Inyang (2004) consist of three steps:-

1. There is a movement from a set of conditions to another.
2. Some force(s) cause(s) the change to come about.
3. An effect or consequence results from change.

In this analysis there are two types of forces, those favouring the change and those opposing it. If the forces pushing in both directions are equal in strength, there will be no change in the status quo.

The only ways to achieve change are:-

- Increase the forces favouring the alternation of the status quo so that they drive back the resisting forces and create the desired equilibrium.
- Reduce the forces opposing the change or some combination of the two

#### **REACTION TO CHANGE:**

The most common reaction to change is resistance and this can be categorized as follows in Jolaoso (1991)

- i) **Active Resistance:** - Active resistance to change may be as a result of ignorance on the part of those affected or misconception or problem of poor communication, this invariably leads to frustration, aggression, resignation etc.
- ii) **Passive resistance:** A mild level of resistance to change.
- iii) **Indifference:** - Some employees would not be bothered whether there is a change process or not.
- iv) **Deliberate Sabotage:** In which case the employee concerned is aware of the change process but deliberately obstructs the path of progress.
- v) **Acceptance/Co-operation:-** Here those affected identify with the change process and try to do all that is within their power to ensure the success and effective implementation of the change process. Managers often resist change for several reasons. Some of these include the following:-
  - a) **Political Factor:** - Nigerian managers resist change because this tends to reduce their power and status.

- b) **Inertia:** - Our managers have a preference for the status quo instead of a radical change.
- c) **Anxiety for the Future:** - People are generally afraid of losing their jobs or their money or their friends having to do less pleasant work and not being able to cope with a new job.
- d) **Way of Introduction:** - Irrespective of the nature and benefits of a change, people tend to be non-supportive if the change is not properly introduced, they tend to show publicly their disgust and dislike for the change.
- e) **Variance of Goals:** - Management vis-a-vis staff is responsible for a large proportion of resistance to change in many organizations. While management's interest centers on policy issues like sales expansion, cost reduction, high turnover, industrial peace etc, the staff is interested in fat salaries and allowances, job security, bonus, scholarship grants, recognition etc. The change process can only be successful if the two sets of goals are harmonized.

## **WAYS OF OVERCOMING RESISTANCE TO CHANGE**

Resistance to change can be overcome or at best reduced through the use of one or more of the following methods.

- a) **Set clear objectives:** - Setting objectives for the company is the prerogative of the executives of the company but there should be an involvement of the operatives as well i.e. those who are going to be affected should be involved in the entire process.
- b) **Sell the disadvantages of the status quo** i.e. get the people to recognize that they have a problem.
- c) **Introduce the change gradually** i.e. give as much notice as possible to ensure that the lag time gives enough room for preparations.
- d) **Involve people;** ask for their opinion about how they want the change process implemented.
- e) **Sell the advantages of the new method** to show that change will lead to increased satisfaction.

- f) Provide full information about the nature of the change and its effects.
- g) Let people air their views i.e. be a good listener and show sympathy for their fears.
- h) Find the opinion leader of group and concentrate your persuasion efforts on him.
- i) Sell yourself as well as the desired change.

### **INTEREST OF NIGERIAN EXECUTIVES IN THE CHANGE PROCESS:**

The Nigerian executive is expected to take active interest in the change process because:

- a) The working environment is dynamic
- b) His main business is to manage change.
- c) Managerial functions revolve around changes in technology, product mix, product design, product life cycle extension etc.
- d) There are continuous changes in the socio-economic expectations of the society.
- e) Progress in all fields of human endeavour is a product of change (Jolaoso 1991).

### **STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTING CORPORATE CHANGE**

- **Effective Leadership:** - There is need for effective leadership and motivation for organization to achieve successful change. Change cannot be achieved without people. Amah (2006), postulate that people, throughout the organization need to be made interested and active in helping it meet its challenges. Organizations need managers who are leaders and can get and communicate a vision for the organization. Leaders that can motivate people towards the achievement of the vision. Such leaders partner with employees to achieve the continuous adaptation needed for today's organization. It takes motivated employees to endure the hardships and stress associated with change.
- **Successful Change:** - A successful change occurs when an organization has moved from one state to another in a planned future after the change, when the new state meets the expectations in the plan and when this is accomplished without excessive cost to the organization and its members.

There is a sequence of elements for achieving a successful change which includes: idea, needs, adoption, implementation and resources (Amah, 2006).

Ideas could come as a result of internal creativity, suppliers, professional associates, consultants or research literatures. Needs could arise from perceived problems or opportunities, customers, competition, legislation, regulation or from labour force. When ideas meet with needs or vice versa, it leads to adoption. The idea and needs are considered by key managers and employees and when there is an agreement to support the change, adoption occurs. Implementation occurs after adoption and it refers to the actual use of the new idea technique of behaviour. Resources are generally needed for creating and implementing the new idea. .

### **TECHNIQUES FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF CHANGE:**

Implementation of successful change involves Managers and Employees, Daft in Amah (2006) techniques for change implementation include:-

- Identify a true need for change. A careful examination of the existing situation will enable one achieve this. Find an idea that fits the need from ideas sources e.g. employees, suppliers, professional associates, consultants and research literature.
- Get top management support.
- Design the change for incremental implementation.
- Plan to overcome resistance by:-
  - a) Education and Communication: If people are persuaded they will help with implementation. This is time consuming.
  - b) Employee Commitment to Implementation of Change.
  - c) Negotiation and Agreement: - Resistance can be easily avoided by negotiating with powerful resistant individuals.
  - d) Ensuring that Change Meets with Actual Needs of Users: - If people are sure change will benefit users, they will support it.
  - e) Manipulation and Co-operation: Manipulation has to do with trusting and distorting of facts to make them attractive while cooperation seeks to buy off the leaders if the resistant group by giving them key role in the change decision. Both

- are inexpensive ways of gaining support but it can lead to future problems. If the people become aware that they were mocked or used.
- f) Forcing and Coercion: - This is use of power to overcome resistance. It can be risky because it may leave people angry at change managers and change can be sabotaged.
  - g) Facilitation and Support: - Involves providing training and other needed resources for employees to carry out the change and do their work. It works well with adjustment problems as employees have all the support they need.
- Create Change Teams: - Task forces can be created to implement the change. The teams can be responsible for communication, training and other activities.
  - Foster idea Champions:- Idea champions are individuals who take an innovation and actively and enthusiastically promote the idea, build support, overcome resistance and ensure it is implemented.

## **FAILURE OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE**

Organizational change fails generally as a result of several reasons which include the following:-

- i. The assumption is made that everybody understands and shares the issues or the problems. This is often not so.
- ii. The tendency to rush to action, the tendency to go for the quick fix in a frustrated situation where the problem has been around for a long time and something drastic has to be done.
- iii. The presumption that the data and diagnosis are obvious of course there is a lack of skills at data collection and on feedback of data.
- iv. A lack of readiness or willingness to change even when the problem is critical. People have some investment in their illness and they don't give them easily.
- v. Confusing a strategy plan or action plan with implementation which is crucial to change. Many people contract consultancy firms but they do nothing about their recommendations.

- vi Lack of energy for implementation. Most people are so weighted down with their daily routine that is hard to get the energy that is required for change. Energy needs to be built in as a part of the change process.

### **THE CHANGE AGENTS:**

All managers are change Agents irrespective of their professional leaning. Seven groups have been identified by Jolaoso namely:-

- i) **Investigators:** These are those who are driven by curiosity to seek knowledge. Some of the staffers of the central bank belong to this category, into their quest to unearth various happenings at the commercial and merchant banks.
- ii) **Investors:** These are the successful investigators.
- iii) **Application Engineers:** These are those who evaluate market potentials and how inventions are received. The marketing executives fall into this category.
- iv) **Innovators:** Those who introduce new ideas of the society.
- v) **Entrepreneurs:** Those who combine resources and come up with new products.
- vi) **Facilitators:** These are financiers. Some financial houses fall into this category.
- vii) **Life Cycle Extenders:** - These are those who rescue products from decay.

### **NIGERIA CORPORATE PROFILE**

Nigeria according to Osioma (2004), is reputed to have the most dynamic and daring private sector in Black Africa, incidentally the federal Government has a vowed aim of building a private sector-driven economy where the commanding heights shall be in the hands of experts and practitioners why by their aptitude, training and disposition are best suited to run the nation's business life. However, a review of Nigeria's corporate profile will readily reveal some disturbing features that may hinder a pioneering role for the sector in the African Region.

The average Nigeria businessman has a preference for commercial activity over manufacturing or truly value adding productive operation. And even in manufacturing activity, priority of place is given to projects with low gestation periods. Nigerian investors as a general, prefer to occupy both ends of the investment continuum-maintaining maximum profitability, usually in times of economic down turn, the

employee is readily made a victim of change. Cutback in employee benefits, staff day-off and other realignments of staff, are the high points in the typical Nigerian corporate response to change.

### **THE JAPANESE EXPERIENCE:**

The Nigerian populace needs to borrow a leaf from the Japanese experience Japan was a remote Island.

- = Unable to grow enough food to feed its teeming population.
- = Bogged down with the language barrier which creates bottle-necks in its communication process.
- = Flattened physically and psychologically as a result of the second world war of 1939-1945.
- = Over-crowded and is one of the most populous nations in the world per square kilometer.
- = Inhabited by workers who earn rock-bottom pay.

The pertinent question according to Jolaoso (1991) is: How has Japan been able to wade through its crisis to manage its change process? How did Japan manage to become the world leader today in several business centers- auto industry, computer etc? In the auto business, the three giants in Japan namely Toyota, Nissan and Honda are on the right track to hit 2 million mark production and supply to the European market which is in excess of its allocation by the European Union:

The Japanese people have been able to go successfully through the change process because of their COMMITMENT and PATRIOTISM, apart from their nuclear family setting Nigerians have a lot to learn from this.

### **CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS**

Osisioma (2004) concluded by saying that change has become the most permanent feature of life on our planet today. These changes could be disruptive and constructive, immense or minimal, traumatic or ameliorative, all embracing or restricted. If carefully handled could make a turning point for many organizations, but if shoddily handled, they could spell doom and disaster.

Change is moving at a fast pace and to contain it, we must develop managerial confidence and capability to sense, articulate and implement it. The most important factor in carrying this out is people. They are the ones that can forestall the turning of minor irritants and problems into major catastrophes. It has been said that the 19th century, the century of discovering belonged to Europe. The 20th century the age of convergence of information and communication technology belonged to America, According to Osisioma (2004), it has been canvassed that the 21st century will belong to Africa. This may be no more than a pipe dream unless and until we harness the potentials of change and transmute and transform our fledgling corporate scene, through determined effort and diligent management of our abundant human and material resources.

The paper suggest that we must revise our egocentric notions that organizational change is heavily dependent on a master blueprint designed and executed in one fell swoop by an omniscient consultant or top manager.

Also we need to reduce our fond attachment for both unilateral and delegated approaches to change. The unilateral approach although tempting because its procedures are readily accessible to top management, generally serves to perpetuate the myths and disadvantages of omniscience and downward thinking. On the other hand, the delegated approach while appealing because of its democratic connotations may remove the power structure from direct involvement in a process that calls for its strong guidance and support.

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