

BAHR540: Organizational Change Management Analysis

Describe your experience with the change simulation. Briefly assess the effectiveness of your overall change approach. What worked and what did not work? Why?

Our plan was to understand the issues and align key stakeholders before attempting to implement any changes throughout the organization. We started by thoroughly interviewing the core team in an attempt to identify the problems; we then evaluated our team to identify which individuals aligned with our initiatives and those that were resistant. Understanding the need and keeping the big picture in mind we classified the tactics available to us according to the steps of change theory, this enabled us to build an implementation plan in a logical order that maximized the commitment of the team and minimized change resisters. Taking the time to understand the issues, communicate effectively and engage key stakeholders proved to be a highly effective approach resulting in ample employee buy-in.

One of our primary successes was the appropriate identification of our key stakeholders as champions, bystanders, helpers, and resisters. Accurate stakeholder mapping was important because it gave us the ability to engage employees that influenced the implementation of decisions (champion) and those that felt they would be negatively affected by the decisions (resisters). We then used this information to carefully construct our change management team to include the largest resistor (Scott Bell) and one of our champions (Jennifer Smith), our reasoning for this action was that the resistor would feel like part of the team and could have their voice heard in a contained environment where the champion can ensure that there is a balanced opinion. Throughout the simulation we tried to maintain open and effective communication to

justify why the change was happening and communicating a clear understanding of the goals and objectives of the change to uphold the sense of urgency and alignment of company vision. Finally, even though we had created a robust plan we were consistently evaluating feedback from the employees throughout the simulation and trying to understand the repercussions of our actions to identify if any course corrections were required.

Our implementation would have been more effective if we ensured that the change strategy always remained the priority and that activities that diluted focus were minimized. Recognizing that our over arching strategy was to develop teams we should have only aligned the necessary tactics to deliver that strategy. Some of our activities that were focused on quality management such as the ISO 9000 certification took away from the main goal of restructuring the company into teams and worked to decrease our overall employee buy-in. We also did not recognize that not all communication is positive and the CEO delivering a reassuring message could be construed negatively and actually detract from our initiative and decrease employee confidence. Additionally, our team had a false sense constraint on our time and we failed to slow ourselves down to thoroughly understand what all of the tactics meant. There was one or two tactics that we implemented at the inappropriate time merely because we did not have a comprehensive understanding of their activity, these mistakes could have been mitigated and our change implementation would have been more successful if we had read the descriptions of the tactics thoroughly enabling us to only use tactics that were aligned with our approach and implement them at optimum times.

Similarities/differences from real world change experience

To compare the ExperiencePoint simulation to the real world is difficult without first defining key dimensions of comparison. For our group's purposes, we decided to define these dimensions as: 1. The applicability of individual tactics to a real world scenario; and 2. The overall appropriateness of the recommended process.

To begin with, our team discussed our individual experience with organizational change. Between our three members, we found we have experience that spans a range of organization sizes and industries, and have seen a variety of levels of successes following change initiatives; this gave us ample experience to draw on to compare the simulation to reality.

First, we found that overall the list of tactics to select from read largely as a list of best practices that our group felt would be useful in the event of major change; however, there were a small number of tactics that we felt would be of questionable use in a real-world scenario and that we agreed we had not seen to date and would not use in our workplace experience. As an example, we felt the "Disaster Scenario Video" was not a tactic that was likely to be employed in a real-world scenario, as we felt that current management philosophy would largely reject negative incentives as a motivational tactic. On the positive side, we felt that a number of the tactics that surrounded the information gathering, change team selection and communication phases were particularly useful and gave a good indication of how our group would go about an ideal change management scenario. In particular, the "Walking the Floor" tactic was one that was often neglected in our experience, but has huge potential benefits both from an optics and information gathering perspective. We felt that these tactics were the most

important for a real-world scenario as they are crucial to empowering employees for the change and allowing them to own it. At one group member's organization, these tactics were left out over a critical change period which caused resistance by some senior employees, leading to much more difficult implementation and some ongoing issues surrounding the changes.

The tactics surrounding the actual implementation we found were less critical and less tied to reality, as they are much more reliant on individual business operating practices and existing structure. We felt that the most applicable takeaways from this tactical area were the importance of timing the implementation steps correctly within the overall change process, and ensuring that tactics were not employed that distract from the main axis of change (e.g. in our group's simulation experience, implementing ISO 9000).

Secondly, we felt that the overall recommended process aligned closely with our group's view of a well-managed change process. In particular, the need to understand the forces for and against change from a variety of different viewpoints, as well as the need to identify key supporters, resisters, and influencers and strategically involve these stakeholders in the process were areas that we found had importance in our group's collective experience. As well, the need to consistently reinforce the message and keep open lines of communication through the change process were important and sometimes overlooked factors in our experience – they are a critical step to ensure that from an employee perspective, the effort and challenges they are going through during the change are aligning with the ongoing company direction, and that they are updated to see the value that their efforts have upon the change process.

What would you do differently if you were able to start over from the beginning?

Overall if we were to take part in the change simulation again we would focus on the strategy and only take part in initiatives to deliver that strategy. Specifically, we would not use tactics that dilute focus such as ISO 9000 certification or a reassuring message from the CEO. We would increase our knowledge of all tactics and only implement those tactics that align with our approach. Additionally we would have a better idea of the time allotted and ensure that we had a thorough understanding of all of the tactics.

Team Functioning

Being a team of only three people had distinct advantages in this exercise. Having worked together in the past, there was a level of familiarity and trust among team members. This allowed for open and candid communication as a starting point in the discussions. Any disagreements that arose were not taken personally which allowed the team to progress through the process of designing the change management plan with a good cadence. All team members were prepared for the simulation in advance, allowing for informed conversation about the simulation details rather than having to review base understanding or catch team members up. The individual team members all have different job experience and educational backgrounds allowing for past experiences to be drawn on and applied to the simulation. This translated into questions being posed about the applicability of a given tactic in the real world, and further discussion about the likely outcomes and their effectiveness. Referencing Edward de Bono's Six Thinking Hats, our team contained members with an affinity to blue and red hat behaviors. The blue members were driving to keep the discussion

methodical and on task, while the red member was able to offer creativity and intuition to propose alternative ideas. These traits combined allowed for a highly productive, well-rounded team.

While the familiarity among team members had distinct benefits, it also posed drawbacks to the decision making of the team. The level of trust previously attained resulted in decreased questioning of other team member positions or decisions, leading to a lack of healthy discourse. Combined with being forced to make decisions under pressure, the “Collective Rationalization” aspect of groupthink occurred. If we look at the discussion and decision-making in selecting the ISO 9000 certification tactic, groupthink is apparent. One team member had an understanding of the positive effects of this tactic, while the other two-team members didn’t question or pose any objections to the information presented. The understanding and use of this tactic however were incorrect, and the simulation reacted negatively. The team also set a false deadline to complete the simulation, which added additional pressure. This further magnified the impacts of the groupthink mentality, degrading the quality of some of the group’s decisions. In future settings where decisions are made under pressure, the group would benefit from assigning a role of devil’s advocate. This could assist in validating the information presented and seek further clarification from team members on how they arrived at their conclusions. This could help to ensure higher quality decisions and outcomes.