

CHANGES: A CONFLICT MANAGEMENT MODEL FOR ORGANIZATIONAL REDESIGN EFFORTS

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Abstract

Organizational design enhances a company's business strategy by configuring and reconfiguring organizations through the alignment of processes, rewards, policies, structures, and practices. When the organizational design process takes place, the multiple changes involved have the potential to spur conflict that can adversely affect employees and the organization itself. Though conflict naturally ensues during organizational change, it can be successfully lessened with proper management. The purpose of this paper is to present a conflict management model for change agents to use when involved in organizational design. The model uses the acronym CHANGES, which stands for areas of attention for change agents to consider throughout the design process. These areas are: Communication, Help, Assessment, New Roles, Guidelines, Education, and Support.

Keywords: organizational design, conflict management, organizational change, conflict antecedents

Introduction

An oft-heard phrase warns; there is nothing guaranteed in life but change. Dynamic organizations are no exception. Their ever-changing systems are due in part to pressures of competition, strategy and personnel restructuring, and progress in technology (Galbraith, Downey, & Kates, 2002; Heerwagen, Kelly, & Kampschroer, 2010). One can argue that another guaranteed occurrence could be added to that old, repeated phrase. Conflict is often an inevitable component of organizational change (Andersen, 2006; Montana & Charnov, 2000; Raza & Standing, 2011).

The reasons for the conflict during organizational design vary. The purpose of this paper is to present a conflict management model for change agents to use when involved in organizational design. The paper will explore researchers' conclusions determining the antecedents of conflict during the change process as well as various management techniques for assuaging negative conflict instigated by organizational design. A CHANGES model is introduced for change agents to employ when involved in the process of organizational design.

Organizational Design

Galbraith et al. (2002) explain that organizations have three distinct levers of change. They consist of creating the company vision and strategy, choosing executive team members, and organizational design. Though the three are often intertwined, it is the third that involves "the process of configuring structures, processes, reward systems, and people practices and policies to

create an effective organization capable of achieving the business strategy” (p. 2). Once an organizational design is established in a budding business, the attention to this key lever needs to remain a focus of consideration. Organizational design is an iterative process. The evolutionary tendency of organizations requires executives to periodically redesign the organizations to meet the business’ current needs (Beckman, 2009; Galbraith et al., 2002; Kesler & Kates, 2011). Failure to take the time to assess organizational design fit can adversely affect the organization’s sustainability (McGee & Molloy, 2003).

Hubler and Glick (1993) posit that environmental turbulence in organizations continues to occur at a rapid pace. Because of this acceleration, “organizational redesign will become more and more commonplace and critical” (p. 8). Triggers that evoke a redesign process include: the addition of a new division or company within the organization, plan for growth, a change in top management, strategic change, internal realignment, external environmental changes, and organizational performance problems (Galbraith et al., 2002). The iterative nature of the redesign leads to increased opportunities for conflict during those changes.

Antecedents of Design-Initiated Conflict

One standard definition of conflict does not exist (Cox, 2001; Katielidou et al., 2012; Kelly, 2006). However, for the purposes of this paper, it can be described as “a process in which one party perceives that its interests are being opposed or negatively affected by another party” (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2010, p. 373). Certain aspects of organizational design are commonly responsible for the initiation of conflict. Recognition of these antecedents helps organizational executives become aware of the possibility of conflict and take action to assuage it when appropriate (Patton, 2014).

Complexity of Organizations

As previously stated, the more turbulent the organization, the more likely it will need to be redesigned. The constant flux of the dynamic, complex organization makes for a stressful environment that can be perceived as overwhelming (Haraway & Haraway, 2005). This atmosphere of stress is so intensified during organizational changes such as redesign efforts, that the development of conflict is heightened (Andersen, 2006).

Personal Factors

Individual responses to the redesign efforts are one of the prime reasons for organizational design problems (Saksvik, 2007). While some individuals are receptive to organizational changes, others find themselves quite resistant (Heichberger, 1974; Kreitner & Kinicki, 2010, Oreg, 2003; Wanberg & Banas, 2000). Kreitner and Kinicki, (2010) describe change resistance as an “emotional/behavioral response to real or imagined threats to an established work routine” (p. 549). The authors cite three potential reasons for change resistance: a poor relationship between the change agent and the change recipient, the change agent’s actions and/or inactions lead to resistance, or the resistor is unreasonable and self-interested.

In the implementation stage of organizational design, it is vital to communicate the new design and strategy prior to its enactment (Galbraith et al., 2002). An example of a change agent’s inaction causing resistance would be a failure to communicate a new design to

subordinates. Though apprised of the changes, every employee may not necessarily agree with the changes. That is expected; however, it is the change agent's duty to manage skepticism and help subordinates "get comfortable with new configurations, roles, and expectations" (p. 254). Failure to inform employees about the reason for the redesign, as well as its course and consequences, increases the chances of an anxious and insecure workforce since unanswered questions prevail and rumors circulate (Andersen, 2006). Unfortunately, full disclosure of information is often avoided in the implementation of change (Paulus, 2002; Stasser, 1999). Open lines of communication are imperative to mitigate organizational conflict (Robbins, 1998; Van Tonder, Havenga, & Visagie, 2008; Vecchio, 2000).

Individual perceptions regarding change can lead to employees who favor the organizational design process at odds with those who are resisting such a change. Some employees may benefit more than others in the design process, which can lead to dissention. Conflict may erupt between those who perceive themselves to be winners versus losers in the design implementation (Andersen, 2006; Fawcett & Johnstone, 2010).

Organizational design is sometimes catalyzed by lack of agreement on social norms. Griffiths and Gilly (2012) note that in service industries, people practices and policies may require alterations due to customer belief conflicts. The authors give the example of a café encounter. Some customers may disagree with others about rights of occupying space in the café. One customer may subscribe to the theory of "rent in perpetuity," where a café visitor can stay in the facility as long as they chose, perhaps hours after s/he consumed a café product (p. 143). Another customer may completely differ in beliefs. The "rent until consumed" approach to territoriality involves a customer's right to space "as long as it takes to consume the purchased food/drink" (p. 143). When this type of individual belief conflict occurs, managers must decide whether it would behoove the business to create a clear policy to limit the conflicts that arise from lack of agreement on social norms.

Role Conflict and Ambiguity

During the course of reconfiguring organizational structures, new organizational roles often arise. An organizational role is a specific "organizational component defined by a unique outcome and set of responsibilities" (Galbraith et al., 2002, p. 81). In organizational design, the components can stay the same but the roles involved will most likely be altered. Galbraith et al. (2002) posit that the creation of organizational roles may be the most important design activity to the organization's employees. With transitions in workers' roles and responsibilities comes role conflict and role ambiguity. Role conflict occurs when an employee receives incompatible demands from different leaders (Andersen, 2006; Chen & Spector, 1992; Rogers & Molnar, 1976). Role ambiguity results when an employee is lacking in information regarding duties or expectations are inadequately communicated (Rogers & Molnar, 1976). Role conflict and role ambiguity are responsible for the eruption of multiple interpersonal conflicts in the workplace (Andersen, 2006; Kantek & Kavla, 2007; Kath, Stichler, Ehrhart, & Sievers, 2013; Van de Vliert, 1998).

Change agents often focus so much on change resisters during redesign efforts that they overlook the potential damaging effects of role conflict and ambiguity (Cooper & Markus, 1995; Raza & Standing, 2011). Changes in job functions are often accompanied by fear and defensiveness as concerns regarding job security and role identification arise (Pichault, 1995; Saksvik et al., 2007). Job security is a grave concern for employees during mergers and

acquisitions, as the chance of reductions in force is high. Problems of role changes occur during organizational design, which include receiving incompatible demands from different leaders (Andersen, 2006; Chen & Spector, 1992), and an employee completing tasks that are generally not included in their daily work assignments (Andersen, 2006). Role conflict results in employee uncertainty (Ameen, Jackson, Pasewark, & Strawser, 1995; Keim, Landis, Peirce, & Earnest, 2014). One outlet of uncertainty and insecurity is aggressive behavior, which is often displaced instead of targeted at the source. This reaction often leads to interpersonal conflict (Andersen, 2006). Hence, workplace interpersonal aggression is a common response to organizational woes (Andersen, 2006; Fox & Spencer, 1999). Van Tonder et al. (2008) understand this possible consequence as they warn, “the uncertainty that accompanies organizational change heightens prospects for intra organizational conflict” (p. 373).

Randall (2007) conducted a qualitative study that describes a real-life organizational design example of employees completing tasks generally not required of them. The study revealed that in the structural reconfiguration, case managers were now “being held financially accountable and are primarily from nursing backgrounds” (p. 5). The case managers’ added responsibilities contributed to a “significant” increase in their stress levels (p. 6). They were forced to make decisions about how to allocate resources, which often made them uncomfortable about the quality of care provided. The nurse participants in Randall’s study were accustomed to providing the best possible care without focusing on the cost involved. This refocus of attention to financial concerns led to a type of individual conflict in which the new role conflicts with the individual’s value system.

Lack of Social Support

When social support is lacking, employees can experience negative feelings. Types of social support are: appraisal support, which consists of performance feedback; informational support, which helps to answer employee questions; instrumental support, which offers tangible aid to employees; and emotional support, which involves feelings of trust and care (Andersen, 2006; Maleki & Demaray, 2003). Unfortunately, social support deficiencies occur frequently during organizational change (Andersen, 2006). Greater social interaction will increase commitment to change, when followers perceive fairness in the change processes, according to a study by Bouckenooghe, De Clercq, and Deprez (2014) When a perception of fairness is lacking, however, “personal clashes not only are more likely to emerge, but the negative emotions (e.g. frustration, anxiety) that come with them are more easily triggered, further reducing employees’ commitment to change” (p. 531). Thus, the authors advise that in cases where the organizational crisis impedes fairness perceptions or relational conflict resolution, leaders may consider discouraging informal interactions with followers during the change process.

Power Dynamics

Organizational design can involve tipping points. A tipping point is “a change in power that shifts the company’s momentum in a new direction” (Kesler & Kates, 2011, p. 228). Power shifts, whether they result in more power to an individual or to an entire department or unit, seldom take place without conflict. Though the reason for the shift in power may have great strategic foundations, the individual or group of individuals losing power and status may resent the shift to another individual or group.

Affective conflicts could ensue when shifts in power take place as a result of redesign efforts. Affective conflicts “are characterized by personal antagonism, collaborative difficulties and the parties’ hostile feelings towards each other” (Andersen, 2006, p. 221). The parties who perceive a loss in power may misinterpret strategic reasoning for personal assault, resulting in “hostile attribution error” (p. 222). Consequences of this misinterpretation may lead to mutual opposition and escalated conflict. Even in cases where there is shared power, top executives often are in conflict with each other due to “issues of executive coordination and responsibility,” where executives ask each other, “who’s supposed to do what, how soon, and where” (Morrill, 1991, p. 591).

Power struggles also occur when organizational design results in process changes. Pichault (1995) offers several case studies illustrating “power games” during organizational changes due to process changes, including one that occurred in a health care facility. The health care organization’s top administrators invested in an integrated computer system resulted in less duplication of services, such as identification procedures and registration processes. However, physicians complained about the new system and refused to computerize their accounts, citing them as confidential. Shweta and Jha (2010) asserted that refusal to complete assigned duties as an antecedent to interpersonal conflict between the party assigning the task and the one who refuses to do so. Pichault’s (1995) health care case study exemplifies Raza and Standing’s (2011) assessment that organizational changes frequently lead to conflicts that “hinder the change process” (p. 187).

The case study also illustrates Galbraith et al.’s (2002) point about coordinating mechanisms in organizations. In the case, the computerized system coordinates various departments of the organization. Differences in points of view emerge as this change takes place. Openly discussing disparate views reduces groupthink and complacency, resulting in a type of functional conflict (Jehn, 1995). These differences can result in better ideas and decisions (Galbraith et al., 2002; Nemeth, Personnaz, Personnaz, & Goncalo, 2004). However, they can also lead to bullying to lead others to accept the bullies’ point of view. They can also result in a compromise between the two parties, without resolving the problem, simply for the intent of preserving friendships. Of the last two results, the latter is worse, according to Galbraith et al. (2002).

Work Demands and Time Pressures

It is the implementation phase that will typically affect the most employees during the change. Saksvik (2009) cites a 2000 study conducted by Grimsmo and Hilsen that revealed, “48% of employees totally or partly agreed that the management neglects the work environment while focusing on organizational changes” (p. 46). This can lead to resentment and extra duties for employees. Increased workload can lead to exhaustion, which Petrou, Demerouti, and Schaufeli (2015) describe as “one of the most common costs of organizational change in terms of occupational health” (p. 477).

The complexity of contemporary businesses calling for iterative organizational redesigns, coupled with the rising employee workload, indicates a growing conflict-riddled workforce. Work overload is positively related to interpersonal conflict (Jaramillo, Mulki, & Boles, 2011). The number of work hours has shown to be positively correlated to worker conflict (Spector, Dwyer, & Jex 1988). Jaramillo et al. (2011) posit that work overload is on the rise in today’s economy.

Managing Design-Initiated Conflict

Conflict is inevitable in organizations (Dougan & Mulkey, 1996; Kreitner & Kinicki, 2010; Pichault, 1995). And it is certainly prevalent during organizational design processes. In the words of Lingnan University of Hong Kong's Dean Tjosvold, "change begets conflict, conflict begets change" (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2010, p. 372). Schein (2010) acknowledges that there are various interpretations of the word conflict and well as its connotations. Some feel that conflict refers to a "severe disagreement that is difficult if not impossible to reconcile. Similarly, they may feel that it is bad because it implies poor management skills. Others, like Schein, feel that conflict refers to any level of disagreement involving two or more individuals and that wherever humans interact, there will naturally be some level of conflict. The former mindset is more traditional; the latter is a relatively new trend in western organizational literature (Andersen, 2006).

Constructive Versus Destructive Conflict

Though some still view conflict as purely dysfunctional, conflict can potentially result in positive outcomes (Jehn, 1995; Nemeth et al., 2004; Pelled, Eisenhardt, & Xin, 1999; Rahim, 2002). Andersen (2006) proffers that conflict does not only represent crisis but also invites possibility. Eisenhardt, Kahwajy, & Bourgeois (1998) assert that senior executives engaging in conflict is often essential for effective strategies to evolve. When conflict results in a "healthy and vigorous challenge of ideas, beliefs, and assumptions," conflict can transform a good organizational design process into a better one (Menon, Bharadwaj, & Howell, 2001, p. 303). For example, if a process change in an organization presents with glitches in its implementation and the users communicate their disapproval of those problems, interactive dialogue between the change agent and the employee(s) involved in the process change can result in a highly functional, usable alternative. The conflict may also prevent a change from occurring if those affected by the proposed change find it unnecessary and voice their opinions to the change agent (Heichberger, 1974).

Andersen (2009) posits that in order to manage conflict effectively, organizations must create an environment where task-oriented conflicts are accepted and welcomed" (p. 46). He continues that establishing norms for dealing with such conflict is essential. In fact, a conflict culture, one that is open to conflict, flexible, and changeable, helps increase the sustainability of the organization (Andersen, 2009; Putnam, 1997; Rahim, 2002).

Conbere (2001) believes that dealing with conflict is imperative. "Managing conflict has been recognized as an important task in organizations for at least three reasons" (p. 215). He describes those reasons as follows. First, the trend of focusing on collaboration means that employees must work together while overcoming their differences. Second, content employees are apt to stay in the workplace. Retention of employees is essential with the rapidly growing retirement of Baby Boomers. Finally, the cost of litigation to resolve conflicts is ever increasing; early management can prevent such litigation. The third reason Conbere describes sounds more like conflict resolution than conflict management.

Andersen (2006) differentiates conflict management and conflict resolution. He describes the goal of conflict management as channeling "an existing conflict in a constructive direction rather than eliminating it" (p. 226). Conflict resolution, on the other hand, implies that conflict is dysfunctional and must be diminished or totally eliminated (Andersen, 2006). Haraway and Haraway (2005) caution leaders "not to try to eliminate conflict" (p. 11). Rather, they advise

managing the disagreements in order to become more efficient. Some of the conflict literature still reveals those who feel that conflict “elimination of conflict is always the goal,” regardless of whether the differences seem constructive in the beginning (Dougan and Mulkey, 1996, p. 3). Wall and Callister (1995) insist that scholars who promote moderate conflict in the workplace, or who believe that there could be an insufficient amount of conflict in the workplace, are confusing conflict with debate. They warn that conflict is apt to escalate and cause deleterious effects to an organization. Escalating workplace conflict can lead to such negative outcomes as decreased performance and job satisfaction (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003), as well as the potential of consultation and litigation expenses (Freres, 2013).

Mergers and Acquisitions

As described previously, one type of organizational design involves acquisition of a new company or division within the organization. Weber, Rachim-Moore, & Tarba (2011) conducted a study of cross-cultural mergers which verified that productivity improved with an increase in communication during the organizational design process. They found “an increase in post-merger communication is positively related to acquirer performance” (p. 93). However, the increased communication “was found to have a significant positive association with performance in Japan and Denmark and a significant negative association for German acquirers” (p. 89). This finding exemplifies the need to take caution when undergoing cross-cultural organizational design processes as various cultures may have differing preferred styles of dealing with organizational changes.

Research conducted by Cohen, Birkin, Cohen, Garfield, and Webb (2006) revealed several factors that resulted in a successful acquisition redesign effort. First, the acquirers held an “all-hands meeting” at the time of the acquisition disclosure (p. 326). This helped assuage any fears and uncertainty early on. Second, no layoffs took place in the initial phase of this acquisition, which is uncommon during many acquisitions and mergers. Furthermore, the acquiring organization had a history of prior successful acquisitions, which allayed fears of unnecessary changes taking place. During the acquisition process, the organization facilitated upward feedback by sending surveys to all employees, asking for their opinions of various situations. This measure helped the employees feel as though their opinions were valued. The authors revealed that the acquiring organization demonstrated significant respect for the acquired organization during the transition, which further added to the success of the integration. The participants revealed that the acquirer expressed satisfaction with the acquired organization’s employees, noting that the organization was quite successful. By enhancing employee and organizational self-esteem, the emotional impact of the acquisition was minimized. Additionally, “it set up an atmosphere in which employees wanted to demonstrate their capabilities” (p. 325).

One factor that led to conflict was the shift in the company culture. The adaptation to the new culture proved difficult to some of the participants. Cohen et al. (2006) heard participants speak longingly of the way things were done in the past. They shared that the acquisition made for a “typical corporate environment” and that there was “plodding in the quagmire of the corporate world” (p. 324). Although most participants’ jobs remained the same, the atmosphere changed. The participants from the acquired company also felt increased pressure to meet deadlines, as the acquired company’s due dates were much more flexible than that of the acquiring company.

CHANGES Model

Change agents can use the acronym CHANGES to manage conflict when undertaking organizational design measures (see figure 1). CHANGES stands for Communication, Help, Assessment, New Roles, Guidelines, Education, and Support. By remembering these six areas throughout the design process, negative conflict can be lessened. In large organizations, it may be beneficial to assign an individual or team to each one of the six. Communication throughout the entire project will assuage fears and uncertainties. Help refers to the extra assistance that workers need while changes are taking place and transition of roles occur. Assessment applies to an overall look at the effectiveness of the entire operation. Organizational design efforts start with an assessment of the current climate to determine if any changes could increase organizational effectiveness.

Once structures, processes, reward systems, people practices, and/or policies are recognized as being in need of change, and the changes put in place, assessing the soundness of those changes is vital. Assessment includes offering employees honest feedback during the change process to address issues before they fester. Self-assessments will help the change agents realize what is working and what may require more attention. New roles need to be defined so employees understand their contribution to the organization during mid-design and post-design. Guidelines such as rules and policies may change during design – define and communicate these guidelines to the affected employees. Education is needed to avoid power differentials and to explain new procedures and processes. Finally, support demonstrates care for the employees and making them more comfortable with the changes. This is a vital element when attempting to manage conflict during organizational design.

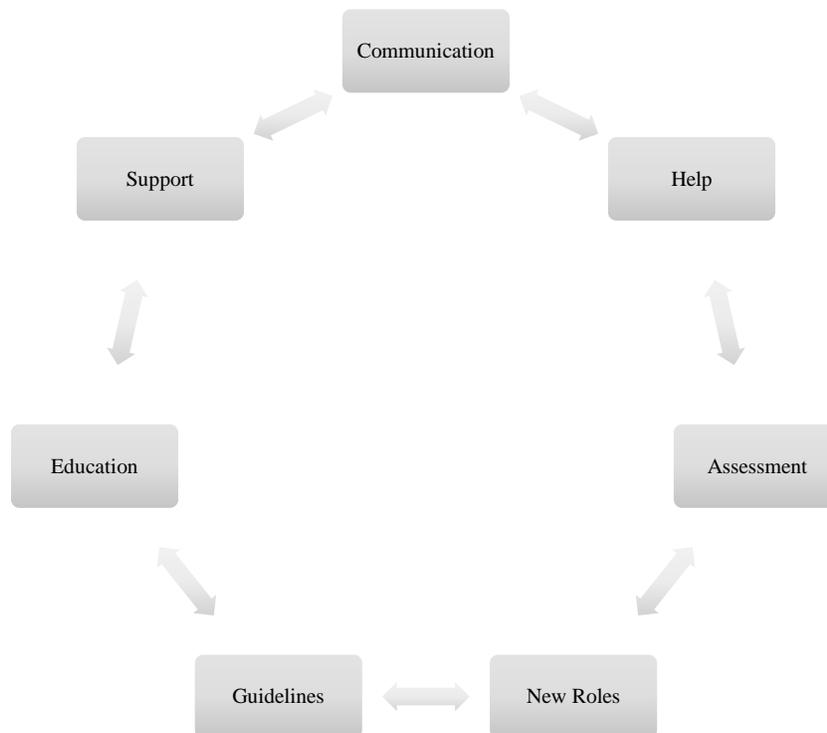


Figure 1: The CHANGES Model

Kotter (1996) posited that 70% of change efforts are unsuccessful at achieving intended outcomes. Conflict in the change process inhibits goal achievement. Utilization of the CHANGES model can increase chances of an effective organizational design effort. The CHANGES Model provides change agents with specific areas to address during organizational design to help manage conflict during this often-difficult process.

Recommendations for the Design Process

For the purposes of this paper, conflict management takes into consideration the possibility of escalation. Thus, the following recommendations for transitioning the design process more smoothly are suggested, when considering many of the possible antecedents. These recommendations follow the CHANGES model. This is not a linear model; rather, the suggested actions are to take place whenever needed, often periodically.

Communication

Communication is a key component in the organizational design plan (Galbraith et al., 2002; Saksvik et al., 2007). In order to avoid fear and speculation, articulation of the “rationale for the change, the options that were considered, and how a redesign has benefits that outweigh the current state” needs to be delivered to the workforce (Galbraith et al., 2002, p. 258). Explaining the plans, more than once and at regular intervals, will contribute to employees’ understanding of the design process. This direct, transparent approach can assuage conflict that results from fear and speculation.

When change agents take the time to inform employees through openly discussing roles, expectations, and intentions, the employees’ well-being most likely will increase, while concurrently reducing the sense of uncertainty and fear. Sears, Shi, Coberley & Pope (2013) conclude that overall well-being is positively correlated to employee productivity and retention. Thus, investing the time for clear communication will lead to a more effective organizational design outcome.

Help

As Kreitner and Kinicki (2010) suggested, a change agent’s actions or inactions can lead to resistance during organizational change. One such inaction, as noted earlier, is management’s neglect of the work environment while focusing on the changes (Saksvik, 2009). Managers can prepare for the increased workloads and added responsibilities of large organizational design efforts by hiring contingent workers to help out during the process. This temporary pool of employees can be useful in attending to matters that might otherwise have been delegated to already stressed employees. In smaller design efforts, or large ones that do not run the threat of employee exhaustion, help can be as simple as leadership rounding on employees. Rounding, also known as management by walking around (MBWA), involves leaders periodically walking around the staff (Dean & Dean, 2015). If leaders recognize a need for additional help, providing such help by personally lending a hand temporarily or by utilizing cross-trained employees serves to proactively prevent exhaustion or failure to reach job goals. Leaders cannot expect that subordinates will apprise them of problems; this information must be sought out (Galbraith et al., 2002).

Assessment

This step is vital to any strategic planning endeavor. It is an assessment process that catalyzes the entire organizational design process. Prior to making any changes, the current climate is assessed to determine if it aligns with the success of the organization. Then once any structures, processes, reward systems, people practices, and/or policies are recognized as being in need of change, the design effort begins.

Assessment interviews can be used to determine which current employees fit into the new roles required in the design. Galbraith et al. (2002) describe the assessment interview as an in-depth (2-3 hour long) discussion between an internal or external interviewer and a current employee. The interview is meant to reveal the employee's past professional accomplishments and approaches to work. Since fresh skills need to be acquired rapidly when filling new roles, assessing learning aptitude is critical. The authors advise the interviewer to ask the current employees "to describe a time when they used or demonstrated the competency, the challenges they faced, and what they learned and applied from the experience" (p. 231). The staffing of new roles can be based on these assessments.

When changes are put in place, assessing the soundness of those changes is vital. Assessment includes offering employees honest feedback during the change process to address issues before they fester. Self-assessments will help the change agents realize what is working and what may require more attention. Upward feedback and customer feedback are also components of the assessment process. This can be accomplished through surveys, focus groups, or an intranet site specifically designed for questions, comments, and concerns involving the design efforts (Galbraith et al., 2002).

New Roles

As aforementioned, role conflict and role ambiguity are antecedents to interpersonal conflicts in the workplace (Andersen, 2006; Kantek & Kavla, 2007; Kath, Stichler, Ehrhart, & Sievers, 2013; Van de Vliert, 1998). Changes in roles directly affect employees and can cause unease. This unease can be attributed to unfamiliarity with the new roles, perceptions of job insecurity, and fear of change itself. Employees should be well aware of their roles, as "job insecurity is negatively related to readiness for change" (Saksvik et al., 2007, p. 258). Clarifying roles should be done through constructive conflict and one-on-one discussions.

Role ambiguity has been found to decrease job performance (Celik, 2013). Employee angst lessens when revised expectations and duties are plainly articulated rather than assumed. Leaders are advised to discuss the changes not only with subordinates, but with their colleagues as well. This keeps role conflict at a minimum. When employees receive disparate demands from various leaders, they may become confused and conflicted as to whose orders to follow while still remaining in good standing within the organization. A shared vision for the organizational design reduces conflict.

Guidelines

Creating guidelines strengthens the idea of a shared vision for the design. These guidelines are administered through rules and policies that communicate expectations. New rules and policies that accompany the organizational design process need to be clearly communicated, not

only verbally but give employees a written copy for future reference. In addition to merely communicating the new rules and policies, explain the reasons for the changes. Free (2012) asserts that when employees understand the reasons for new rules and policies, they are more apt to follow them.

Education

Educating about new rules and policies and their reasoning is one element of this component. Other educational needs may include introduction to new technology and procedures. Once the new information is exchanged, change agents can assign those with higher learning aptitude as mentors to others who need additional instruction. The more familiar the staff becomes with the changes, the greater the chance of a successful outcome. Employees also must be encouraged to invest in their own development so a culture of learning is established (Galbraith et al., 2002).

Support

Change agents must find ways to address emotional, informational, instrumental, and appraisal support needs during organizational design. By taking time to keep employees abreast of changes, express concern for their needs and fears, give regular feedback, and ensure they get additional help with work overload these needs will be lessened. Each of the types of social support has “a significant effect on the experience of change on one’s job position,” according to a study on the effects on employee health during organizational mergers conducted by Vaananen, Pahkin, Kalimo, & Buunk (2004, p. 1903).

Conclusion

Organizational design should be conducted whenever there is a misalignment of strategy, structure, processes, people, and rewards within the company. Certain triggers that catalyze this misalignment are the acquisition of a new company within the organization, planned growth, a change in executive leadership, strategic change, internal or external changes, and organizational performance troubles. When the organizational design process is implemented, the multiple changes involved can inadvertently cause problems for the employees and the organization itself through the presence of conflict. Some antecedents of conflict include the complexity of the organization, personal factors, role conflict and ambiguity, lack of social support, power dynamics, and work demands and time pressures. Though not all conflict is dysfunctional, it is helpful to assuage growing conflict before it adversely affects the organization at a micro or macro level. The CHANGES model advises change agents to attend to areas of Communication, Help, Assessment, New Roles, Guidelines, Education, and Support throughout the design process. By employing the CHANGES model, change agents can increase their chances of a successful organizational design initiative.

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