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Understanding Organizational Change: A Theoretical and Practical Exploration of Change Management Dynamics

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Abstract:

This study explores the core dimensions of effective change management, focusing on individual buy-in, stakeholder communication, and visible leadership involvement. It highlights the critical role of managers and senior leaders in building trust and engagement, and reframes communication as a means of fostering shared understanding rather than merely conveying information.

Key findings emphasize the importance of appropriate timing; the decisive role of communication; the necessity of securing stakeholder commitment; the strategic impact of leadership involvement; and the imperative to support change through to completion to ensure its long-term integration. On the basis of these insights, the study concludes with practical recommendations to support successful and sustainable change initiatives.

Keywords: Change Management; Communication and Training Strategies; Organizational Learning; Leadership in Change; Resistance to Change.
Jel Classification Codes : M10 ; M12.

ملخص:

تستكشف هذه الدراسة الأبعاد الجوهرية للإدارة الفعالة للتغيير، مع التركيز على تبني الأفراد للتغيير، والتواصل مع أصحاب المصلحة، والمشاركة الظاهرة للقيادة. وتُبرز الدراسة الدور الحيوي للمديرين وكبار القادة في بناء الثقة وتعزيز المشاركة، كما تعيد صياغة مفهوم التواصل باعتباره وسيلة لترسيخ فهم مشترك وليس مجرد أداة لنقل المعلومات.

وتؤكد النتائج الرئيسية على أهمية التوقيت المناسب، والدور الحاسم للتواصل، وضرورة ضمان التزام أصحاب المصلحة، والأثر الاستراتيجي لمشاركة القيادة، ووجوب دعم عملية التغيير حتى اكتمالها لضمان ترسيخها على المدى الطويل. واستناداً إلى هذه الرؤى، تختتم الدراسة بتقديم توصيات عملية لدعم مبادرات التغيير الناجحة والمستدامة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: إدارة التغيير؛ استراتيجيات التواصل والتدريب؛ التعلم التنظيمي؛ القيادة في ظل التغيير؛ مقاومة التغيير.
تصنيف جال: M10 ؛ M12

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I- Introduction :

Today, organizations of all types are experiencing numerous changes, differing in nature, scale, timing, and rhythms. These changes can be seen, on one hand, as more or less significant ruptures, challenges, ways of thinking and acting that are deemed unsatisfactory and, on the other hand, as opportunities for developing new skills that lead the organization toward a more desirable situation. In light of this widespread perception that change is now inevitable within organizations, several key questions arise that help define the framework of this phenomenon:

Why do organizations need to change? What drives these changes? What are the underlying motivations?

What are the changes targeting? This question not only highlights the sources of dissatisfaction but also helps to define the outlines of the desired future situation, where we want to lead the organization.

How does change occur? This question situates itself in the space between the current state of dissatisfaction and the envisioned target state, a space we can call the “change process”. This process can be seen as a kind of “black box” in which various transformations unfold.

Where do we want to go? How can we describe a future situation that, after the change, would be more satisfactory?

Change is no longer an exceptional event in the life of an organization; it has become a constant feature of its evolution. Whether triggered by technological advances, economic shifts, regulatory reforms, or internal strategic choices, change often represents both a challenge and an opportunity. However, despite its ubiquity, the implementation of change frequently meets resistance and fails to achieve its intended goals. This reality highlights the necessity of a structured and strategic approach to change management, one that not only defines processes but also addresses human and relational dimensions. Change cannot be reduced to a series of technical actions; it must be supported by genuine individual and collective engagement.

This article aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the key components of change management, grounded in both theoretical models and empirical observations. We will examine the stages of change management (diagnosis, implementation, and steering), while analyzing the role of communication, resistance, and the involvement of leadership. Through this lens, we choose to focus on this topic, aiming to shed light on its complexities and contribute to the development of practical solutions that help in the effective and successful implementation of organizational change.

I.1. The Change: A Factor among Organizational Learning Elements

The process of changing a specific situation has become a key issue in the field of organizational learning. Addressing dysfunctions within an organization, often caused by changing circumstances, through the development of new skills is also a central focus of organizational learning.

I.1.1. What Organizational Learning means?

According to (Aubert-Lotarski, 2014, p. 2), several authors have contributed to the development of the concept of organizational learning by emphasizing a range of key factors, including:

- The training and development of organizational members, which demonstrates responsiveness to changes in the external environment;
- The creation of a shared vision, which forms the foundation for collective interest and commitment, both essential for generating the energy and focus required for learning;
- The alignment of efforts within teams;
- The ability to incorporate diverse learning methods;

Taking these elements into account, organizational learning can be defined as "the ability of an institution to act by recognizing, as an entity, its errors and correcting them. Furthermore, it must be capable to change its knowledge and value bases in order to generate new action skills and new decision-making" (Elkachradi, 2020, p. 64).

From the perspective of organizational learning, organizational change places the role of each individual at the heart of the transformation process. In this view, organizational learning theories analyze change through the knowledge and understanding held by actors, particularly in relation to the evolution of the organization’s routines.

Authors such as (Aubert-Lotarski, 2014, p. 3) emphasize that, within organizational learning, it is essential to:

- First, understand the current situation and acknowledge the identified dysfunctions;
- Then, be willing to move in a new direction by sharing a realistic vision of the gaps between the initial situation and the desired one, based on the acquisition of new skills that the organization must produce.

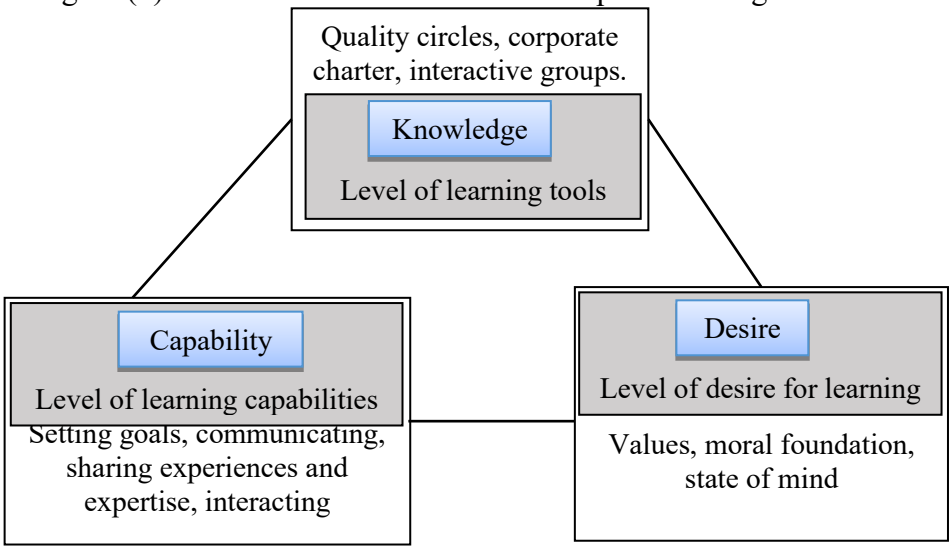
When it comes to knowledge and skills, Argyris and Schön (2002) highlight that learning can be understood in two ways: either as a product (that is something that has been learned), or as the process, through which that product is acquired. In the first case, the question becomes "What have we learned?", referring to an accumulation of information in the form of knowledge or skills. In the second, it becomes "How do we learn?", referring to the act of learning itself, which can be done either effectively or ineffectively (Argyris & Schön, 2002, p. 24).

In such contexts, the need to react and/or anticipate environmental changes quickly necessitates the development of learning capacities, which is understood as a collective process of acquiring and developing knowledge and practices that continuously reshape the organization (Bollecker & Durat, 2006, p. 139).

I.1.2. Critical Factors in Evaluating Organizational Learning:

Probst and Büchel (1995) propose evaluating the stage of development in organizational learning based on three critical factors, illustrated in the following diagram:

Figure (1): Three Critical Factors of Development in Organizational Learning.



The source: (Aubert-Lotarski, 2014, p. 4)

The assessment of the degree of development at the knowledge level is based on an analysis of the tools and methods in use. These include all forms of institutionalized interventions aimed at fostering organizational learning, such as corporate charters, management styles, job rotation, project teams, etc. These tools primarily serve to support the organization's inherent and specific forces of development.

The assessment of the *power level* focuses on the organization's capacity to act in a cooperative and participatory way. This includes communication and explanatory abilities, analytical skills for solving complex problems, and the capacity to memorize and apply knowledge. It is essentially about the *feasibility* of learning, ensuring that both individuals and the organization as a whole are empowered to grow and evolve.

Finally, the assessment at the *desire level* is grounded in the willingness to develop and enhance the potential of individuals and the organization. It requires a readiness to question existing expectations, values, knowledge, and practices in order to explore new and unfamiliar paths (Aubert-Lotarski, 2014, p. 4).

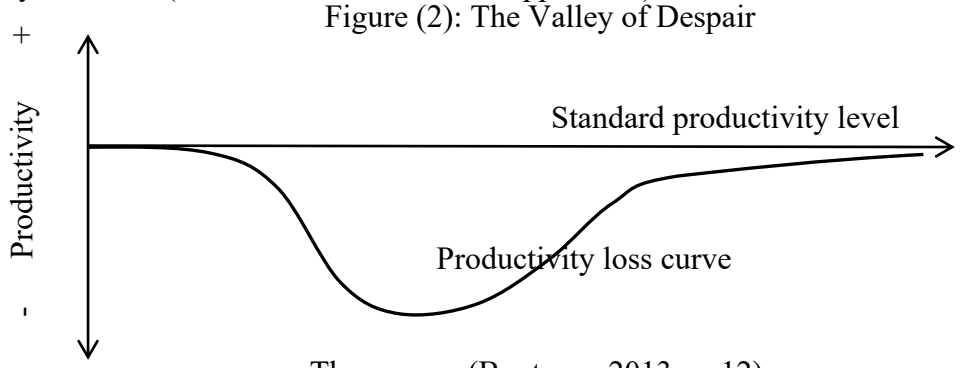
In a general sense, we can say that an organization learns when it acquires information in any form, whether it be knowledge, understanding, know-how, techniques, or practices, regardless of the means used. In this view, all organizations engage in learning, whether intentionally or not, whenever they add to their stock of information, regardless of how that information is obtained (Argyris & Schön, 2002, p. 24).

I.1.3. Organizational Learning: A Key to Successful Transitions

In change projects, there is a crucial moment when supporting beneficiaries becomes especially important: the launch of the project; the day the switch is flipped, and the old system is replaced by the new one. In English, the initialization is called "kick off" and the launch "go live". It is precisely at the "go live" moment that anxiety tends to peak. However, from the day of the launch and, for a period ranging from two to twelve months, depending on the project, a decline in productivity is typically observed. This is due to the need to rethink and adjust work practices under the new conditions, a process that inevitably takes time.

This requirement for reconfiguration and learning leads to reduced performance, often creating a reality that contradicts initial promises or expectations … In fact, change projects almost always involve a temporary drop in productivity during the adaptation phase. This phenomenon is commonly illustrated by a graph known as the "the valley of despair", where productivity decreases on the day of change and requires a sustained learning effort to first recover the initial level and eventually exceed it (Autissier & Moutot, 2013, pp. 14,15).

Figure (2): The Valley of Despair



The source: (Bontems, 2013, p. 12).

The goal of change management is to prepare employees for the transition in a way that minimizes their learning curve and accelerates the realization of the change's positive effects (Autissier & Moutot, 2013, p. 16).

Organizational learning takes place when individuals within an organization are faced with a problematic situation and initiate an investigation on behalf of the organization. They detect a surprising gap between expected and actual outcomes and respond through a process of reflection and action. This process leads them to revise their understanding of the organization or their interpretation of organizational dynamics, and to restructure their activities in order to align outcomes more closely with expectations, thus changing the organizational theory-in-use. For this learning to truly become organizational, the insights gained from the investigation must be integrated either into the mental models held by organizational members or into the epistemological artifacts; such as visual tools, archives, and formal programs, that are inscribed in the organizational environment (Argyris & Schön, 2002, p. 39).

I.2. The Requirements of Change:

Researchers explore the emergence of change within organizations, whether through the introduction of new tools or the appearance of new demands. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the underlying drivers of change. To support this process effectively, management must allocate sufficient time and provide the appropriate tools necessary for implementing change.

I.2.1. What does the Change mean exactly?

In business discourse, the term change has become a constant leitmotif. Leaders frequently present it as a key response to evolving markets, technologies, and regulations, or as an essential dynamic for any organization's survival. Change or disappear has become a defining slogan in management discourse.

But; what exactly do we mean by *change*? What are the forces driving change within organizations, and do they all share the same characteristics?

At what point does an individual recognize a situation as a genuine transformation?

What constitutes *change*? Is everything subject to change? What distinguishes a true change situation from other types of developments?

The term change is polymorphic; it can refer just as easily to a complete organizational overhaul as to something as simple as a change of office. To avoid labeling every act of adaptation or routine evolution as change, Autissier and Moutot (2013) define it specifically in terms of

rupture. According to these authors, for a situation to qualify as change, it must involve a significant rupture from established ways of operating, which compels individuals to make a deliberate effort to adapt.

The transition from the present to the future is not seen as a series of micro-adaptations, but rather as a leap that renders a substantial part of the existing situation obsolete in favor of a new approach associated with progress. In this view, progress or more generally, improvement serves as the main criterion for evaluating change. We agree to abandon our current situation and invest effort only when the anticipated outcome appears to offer meaningful improvement (Autissier & Moutot, 2013, pp. 5,6).

Change is a situation in which our current state becomes obsolete in favor of a future we accept, based on the improvements it promises to deliver. This future state does not yet exist in concrete terms; it gains substance through its formalization and the momentum it generates via the active participation of those involved. In essence, change exists only through the dynamic actions of the individuals who bring it to life (Daniel, 2019, p. 19).

From another perspective, Passenheim (2010) defines change as « *an alteration in a company's strategy, organization, or culture resulting from shifts in its environment, structure, technology, or people* » … Effective managers, therefore, must possess the skills necessary to navigate and manage change within this evolving context. These changes can be alterations in structure (such as modifications in job design, span of control, authority relationships, or coordination mechanisms), in technology (involving new equipment, processes, or work methods) as well as in people (which affect behaviors, perceptions, expectations, or attitudes) (Passenheim, 2010, p. 7).

In line with this perspective, Finch (2012) describes change as any "alteration in the state or quality of anything". Changes may involve people, technology, services, or physical spaces such as buildings. In fact, significant changes often affect multiple aspects simultaneously. However, people within organizations frequently overlook the wise words found in mission statements or the new procedures embedded in the corporate intranet. If change is to succeed, evidence suggests that it must manifest in tangible ways, through what individuals can see, touch, and experience. This type of visible and experiential transformation is the kind of change most likely to be understood and internalized by organizational members (Finch, 2012, p. 1).

Based on the various definitions presented above, we view change as "a breakup" from the familiar present toward an unknown future, which we are willing to embrace depending on the improvements it offers, whether in structure, technology, or people. Organizational change can also be defined as any alteration in the behaviors or ideas of an organization or its subunits. A critical aspect of organizational change is that it does not occur spontaneously; rather, it is driven by specific causal factors that trigger the need for transformation.

I.2.2. The Change: Why?

Early thinkers on the nature of change viewed it as an incremental process. This view of the world is described as the gradualist paradigm. Within this framework, continuous improvement was seen as the primary strategy for managing change in an environment perceived to be largely stable and predictable. According to this model, changes to specific subsystems, such as people, objectives, or infrastructure, provide the necessary interventions that enable small, ongoing adjustments to help the organization adapt to both internal and external conditions. It assumes that one part of the system can be modified without necessarily disrupting the whole.

However, drawing parallels with modern interpretations of biological evolution, many now argue that change in organizations is often not continuous but marked by rapid, transformative events. Just as natural evolution experiences sudden shifts, organizations too can undergo abrupt and sometimes unexpected changes that reshape their structure and operations fundamentally (Finch, 2012, p. 2).

Pascal Christin, Partner at "*Latitude Conseil*", a firm specializing in change management, summarizes the key questions that managers must ask themselves: "What meaning do I assign to change? What is my vision of the world? "

It is therefore essential to begin with the company's culture, values, and organizational structure, and to clearly understand the direction it is heading, in order to give the change initiative both credibility and coherence (Pilar, Véronique, & Christine, 2008, p. 68).

To identify the drivers of change, it is essential to examine the context, making a clear

distinction between internal and external factors (Aubert-Lotarski, 2014, pp. 4,5). External forces include technological, economic, socio-cultural, political-legal, and international influences, as well as market actors such as customers, suppliers, competitors, and potential new entrants to the industry. Internal forces, on the other hand, consist of stakeholders within the organization, namely the owners, managers, employees, and board of directors.

The way managers respond to these internal and external forces can significantly influence the success or failure of the organization. In many cases, it is the combined effect of these forces that creates a powerful momentum for change (Dhar & Dhar, 2014, p. 68).

I.2.3. Towards a Typology of Changes:

The classification of different types of change is based on various studies that approach change through two key dimensions: its intentionality and its pace (Autissier & Moutot, 2003, p. 91).

The dimension of intentionality distinguishes between changes driven by external environmental transformations (imposed change) and those initiated by individuals within the organization (voluntary change). The pace of change refers to the time frame in which it occurs. It can be sudden (involving a comprehensive overhaul of the organizational system), or gradual (unfolding through transitional phases that maintain temporary links with the old system). Effective change management must take this pace into account. By combining the dimensions of imposed vs voluntary and gradual vs abrupt, we can identify four distinct types of change, as outlined below.

Figure (3): Typologies of Change

	Imposed	*Voluntary*
Progressive	Prescribed change ✓ Response to environmental constraints (regulatory, technological …) ✓ 12 to 36 months.	Built change ✓ Organizational developments that lead to changes in the ways in which stakeholders represent their company. ✓ 1 to 10 years. ✓ Customer culture, quality, process.
Brutal	Crisis change ✓ Solution to a malfunction. ✓ 1 day to 3 months. ✓ Accidents, strike, customer complaints.	Adaptive change ✓ Transformation of practices and organization. ✓ 6 to 18 months. ✓ New computer tool, business skills.

The source : (Autissier & Moutot, 2003, p. 93).

I.2.4 The Object of Change: What needs to change?

No area within an organization is immune to change. Whether it involves organizational systems, individual roles, or the organizational culture itself, all can become the focus of a change initiative. However, it is important to recognize that these elements cannot all be changed in the same way. Moreover, any alteration in one part of the system inevitably has ripple effects (direct or indirect) on other parts of the organization.

I.2.4.1. Changes in the Organizational Devices / building a Structure for change:

Even when people recognize the need for change, a culture of trust has been established, and employees begin taking positive actions, structural flaws can still hinder optimal results. It is important to remember that the success of a single initiative does not equate to sustainable change. True, lasting transformation occurs only when the organizational structure itself is adjusted, ensuring that the change can endure beyond the tenure of the leader who initiated it (Nayar, 2010, pp. 11,12).

I.2.4.2. Changes in the Organization's Culture:

Culture can become a barrier to change. There is often a concern that placing too much emphasis on existing cultural traits may hinder the organization's ability to look forward and implement the changes needed for its development. In such cases, culture is seen as a legacy to be preserved, one that shapes both the organization's perception of reality and its vision of the future, potentially limiting its capacity to evolve. Therefore, it is an area that is not evolving quickly (Thévenet, 2017, p. 7).

I.2.4.3. Changes in Roles and Powers:

Roles, relationships, and power are closely interconnected within an organization. Any change in an individual's role inevitably affects power dynamics and alters the nature of relationships with other stakeholders. When confronted with change, individuals may exhibit two broad categories of behavior that can lead to resistance. The first is a rational response, involving a thoughtful analysis of the change, carefully weighing its advantages and disadvantages. The second stems from a more emotional or unconscious reaction, often triggered by a sense of disconnection or disorientation caused by the loss of familiar reference points within the organization (Alexandre-Bailly, et al., 2013, p. 308).

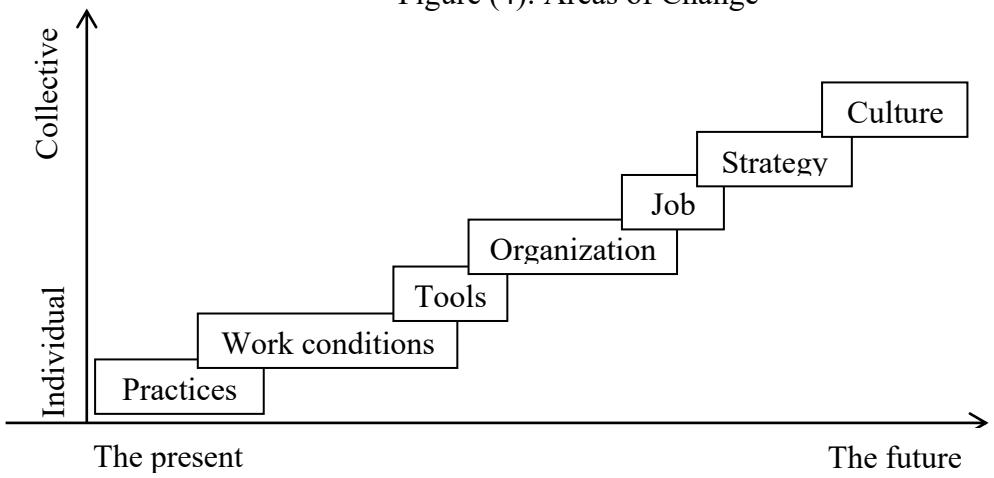
I.2.4.4. Have a Vision of Change:

What is emphasized here is the importance of having clearly defined objectives, leaving no room for ambiguity. According to Colson (2005), who analyzes change within public services, a successful change project must be built on a clear vision, one that includes well-defined goals, is shared by all stakeholders, and allows space for meaningful social dialogue (Colson, 2005, pp. 34-36).

The idea of sharing is based on the premise that a measure is more likely to be accepted when it is collectively supported. Involving stakeholders in the design of the project fosters a sense of ownership and commitment, both of which are essential for the project's success (Aubert-Lotarski, 2014, p. 7).

On the other hand, in an effort to clarify the meaning and dynamics of the change process, Autissier and Moutot (2013) highlight that change constitutes a rupture in organizational functioning when certain key elements are transformed. These include: practices (ways of doing things), working conditions (physical and material environment), tools (it systems and management tools), organization (power structures and functional boundaries), business (the company's core know-how), strategy (collective goals pursued or envisioned), and culture (the underlying system of values). These elements can be organized along two axes: the degree to which they are individual or collective in nature, and the time required to bring about their transformation.

Figure (4): Areas of Change



The source : (Autissier & Moutot, 2013, p. 7).

Across these various elements, change is often marked by the disappearance of what previously existed, which in turn demands a learning effort and/or the abandonment of familiar identity references. For instance, when a company is acquired, an employee may not experience immediate changes in their daily tasks, yet may still feel the impact through the loss of the company's name and the entire value system it represented. The rupture can be either highly tangible or more abstract and emotional in nature.

I.2.5. A Methodology for Managing Change:

Change management is a comprehensive, cyclical, and structured approach designed to guide individuals, groups, and organizations through the transition from a current state to a desired future state, while delivering the expected business benefits (Picado Argüello & González-Prida, 2024, p. 8). However, to ensure that change management goes beyond good intentions and becomes a set of

concrete managerial actions that generate observable effects on stakeholder buy-in and project success, it is essential to identify effective change management styles and methodologies (Bensabaa, Boudier, & Autissier, 2007, p. 324).

Depending on the nature of the project and the populations involved, change management styles typically range between two poles: the technocratic and the participatory, with various intermediate styles developed by authors along this spectrum (Aubert-Lotarski, 2014, p. 8). We presented here four types of leading the change process, which are the most known:

I.2.5.1. Authority-Based Model:

This strategy emphasizes the manager's authority to enforce change, often relying on a top-down approach with little or no participation from others. The main advantage of this directive style is the speed with which change can be implemented. However, its major drawback lies in the lack of consideration for the perspectives and emotions of those involved in or affected by the imposed change. As a result, valuable insights and ideas may be overlooked, and employees often react with strong resentment when change is imposed rather than openly discussed and agreed upon (Passenheim, 2010, p. 34).

I.2.5.2. Intervention-Based Model:

Also called the "innovative" style, this approach is typically justified in times of crisis that require swift intervention. In such situations, those responsible for implementing the change are compelled to act, either by external pressures or directives from higher management. However, the impact of these constraints is softened by the progressive and phased nature of the changes (Bensabaa, Boudier, & Autissier, 2007, p. 324).

I.2.5.3. Information/Communication Based Model:

This style is mainly applied to operational projects. It emphasizes dedicating time to training and clearly explaining both the content and the reasons behind the change. Change designers make deliberate use of communication and negotiation techniques to persuade employees and secure their support.

I.2.5.4. Participation Based Model:

In this model, grassroots employees are given the opportunity to actively participate in the development of the change project itself. It is an endogenous model in which the employees carry the project through each of its stages. This approach is expected to gain their support. Although this model has gained favor among several authors, who link it to the success of change initiatives, they nonetheless specify certain conditions, without which the process risks descending into ambiguity and confusion.

Many researchers point out that participation does not prevent the management team from defining the objectives beforehand, setting out the strategic framework, and clarifying each person's role within the new organization. Rather than presenting a ready-made solution, management provides the overall direction, while employees are entrusted with designing the processes and working methods.

But can this form of participation be applied uniformly, regardless of the situation or the nature of the problem posed?

Authors such as (Charpentier, 2004, pp. 32,33), specify that the participation of the actors depends on several key factors, including:

- *The type of problem:* According to him, grassroots participation is suitable for issues of intermediate importance; such as organizational change, structural modifications, or investment choices. However, it seems inappropriate for strategic decisions, which fall within the domain of senior management and do not align well with "participative management approaches ".
- *The economic context:* Generally, difficult economic conditions or situations requiring emergency management are not favorable for participatory change processes.
- *The local culture:* Cultural norms and values can significantly influence how participation is perceived and enacted.
- *Leadership:* The personal convictions, leadership style, organizational perceptions, and specific constraints faced by leaders all shape the extent to which they allow or encourage participation.

As previously presented, for a change project to be successful, there are various approaches to managing the process. Depending on the nature of the business, its organizational structure, the age of the company, and the average age of its workforce, management must determine which

change strategy is most appropriate to achieve optimal results (Passenheim, 2010, p. 34).

I.2.6. How to Deal with Resistance?

While resistance to change is widely acknowledged, it is less common to see initiatives from organizational leaders aimed at understanding this resistance rather than merely accepting it as a natural reaction. Yet, as De Coninck (2000) suggests, in times of change, don't individuals often have "good reasons to resist", not just bad ones? (De Coninck, 1998, p. 167).

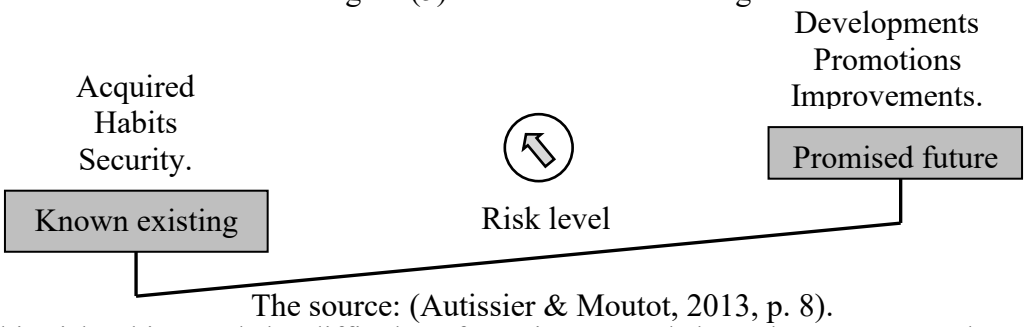
The longer an individual has been accustomed to a particular procedure, the more challenging it becomes to revise or replace it. It is therefore essential to allow sufficient time for adaptation. The greatest amount of time and resources should be allocated to those who are likely to show the highest potential for resistance. Since not all sources of resistance can be identified at the outset, it is important to continuously monitor the project's progress to detect and address potential bottlenecks as they emerge (Pilar, Véronique, & Christine, 2008, p. 69).

The future is often envisioned with hopes of development, advancement, and improvement, driven by the belief that "tomorrow will be better". However, the tipping point in this balance lies in the perceived level of risk, which significantly influences individuals' willingness to embrace and participate in change. Acceptance of change hinges on this critical juncture: the evaluation of the risk involved in abandoning a familiar present in favor of an uncertain future.

In line with this perspective, several key questions naturally arise: Is the change feasible? Is there more to lose than to gain? Will it bring me any tangible benefit?

Autissier and Moutot (2013) illustrate this notion by presenting the risk of change as a balance; where the known existing is more desired than the unknown (promised) future.

Figure (5): The Balance of Change



The source: (Autissier & Moutot, 2013, p. 8).

This risk-taking and the difficulty of moving toward the unknown are explanations for the fear of change. Individuals who do not have the desired part will fight change. Individuals who do not know enough about the cycle of change will have fear and uncertainty about the future. When individuals perceive themselves as lacking the necessary skills or influence to contribute meaningfully to the change, frustration and disengagement may follow. Moreover, if the final stage of change (reinforcement) is overlooked, there is a significant risk of regression, with individuals reverting to old habits and backsliding.

To analyze a change, the willingness to change needs to be diagnosed at an early stage. Change management becomes truly effective when change initiatives occur due to changes in individual mindsets in the organization (Yuniarto, Darwin, & Kisno, 2024, pp. 2,10).

Change is an in-between state. It emerges through a disruption (an imbalance) between the familiar and the unfamiliar, requiring those who experience it to engage in a process of learning and adaptation. Frequently, the true perception of change only becomes evident in retrospect, once the transition has taken place and the new state has been established.

I.2.6.1. Reasons for Resistance:

The theme of resistance to change offers an opportunity to once again highlight the critical role of communication in any change process. Change cannot occur without communication, and this communication must be based on comprehensive, transparent, and relevant information.

Key Change management factors - such as communication and participation - have a demonstrably positive impact on both innovative behavior and overall organizational innovation. Employee involvement in the change process and effective communication are essential for the success of any change initiative. These factors not only facilitate the implementation of change, but also foster an environment of innovation throughout the organization (Picado Argüello & González-Prida, 2024, p. 4).

Another significant source of resistance to change, as highlighted by several authors, stems from a perceived sense of injustice among grassroots employees. This feeling is often rooted in the organizational history, particularly in instances where employees felt they were adversely affected by previous transformations. Solidarity among colleagues, the fear that what happened to others will happen again here, and managerial discourse that focuses exclusively on the added value for the organization, while neglecting to address the concerns and future of operational staff, all contribute to reinforcing employees' apprehensions and resistance. These emotional and historical dimensions underscore the importance of trust-building and inclusive communication in the change process (Aubert-Lotarski, 2014, p. 11).

In discussing resistance, the issue of motivation emerges as particularly significant. As Colson (2005) emphasizes, "people must be made to want to change, and this desire must be maintained." This assertion, frequently echoed in interviews, underscores the centrality of motivation in any change initiative. Without sufficient motivation across all levels of the organization, the implementation of change becomes exceedingly difficult. The challenge is compounded by the fact that change is a prolonged process, while maintaining a high level of motivation over the long term is inherently difficult. Nevertheless, it is precisely this sustained motivation; before, during, and after the transformation (Colson, 2005, p. 53).

The literature emphasizes that resistance among grassroots agents can often be mitigated through effective communication and dialogue. Much of this resistance stems from uncertainty, imprecise information, and a lack of clear explanations; factors frequently perceived as a lack of recognition or consideration for the employees concerned. By addressing these informational and relational gaps, organizations can foster greater trust, reduce ambiguity, and thereby increase acceptance and engagement in the change process.

I.2.6.2. Understanding the Resistance:

Resistance to change is often observed among stakeholder groups who are neither involved in the design of the change initiative nor included in the project team. The literature notes that one of the most common manifestations of this resistance is passive behavior, characterized by disengagement, withdrawal from action, and a wait-and-see attitude. However, more overt forms of resistance can also emerge, including direct opposition to the change. To analyze these behaviors, several researchers propose the DRAS framework, which offers a structured lens for understanding different forms and intensities of resistance.

Figure (6): The DRAS Matrix

BEHAVIORAL	**ACTIONS** Actions are visible because they materialize through specific facts with very concrete consequences. They are most often the work of opposing actors.	**ROUTINES** Routines are the organization's specific ways of doing things that tend to persist and guide individuals' behavior, the difficulty is that they are not formalized.
MINDSET	**DISCOURSE (SPEECH)** Speeches are easy to spot because they are formalized and communicated. The sender and content are easily identifiable, but it is more difficult to trace the source of certain rumors.	**SYMBOLS** Symbols are a concept very close to that of routines. They correspond to codes carried by objects, languages, clothes ... etc.
	VISIBLE	**NOT VISIBLE**

The source: (Autissier, 2012, p. 9).

The DRAS grid is a conceptual tool designed to systematically analyze and observe the different forms of resistance to change from multiple perspectives. It categorizes resistance into four interrelated dimensions:

- **Discourses:** Analyzing the narratives and the individuals or groups who convey them helps inform change management strategies. These discourses can serve as indicators of resistance and provide insight into the nature and scope of the messages that need to be addressed or reformulated.

- **Routines**: These represent informal, historically embedded practices that shape individual behavior within the organization. Although not always visible, routines can perpetuate resistance by reinforcing established norms and habits.
- **Actions:** These are tangible behaviors with observable consequences, often undertaken by actors who oppose the change. They may include strategic use of resources, the promotion of rival projects (rerouting), attempts to discredit the change initiative or its leaders, or passive forms of resistance such as inaction or inertia.
- **Symbols:** Closely related to routines, symbols carry implicit meanings and serve as representations of the organizational culture. They can act either as facilitators or inhibitors of change, depending on the context and the meanings ascribed to them.

By applying the DRAS grid, it becomes possible to identify targets of change; groups of actors who exhibit similar forms of behavior. This classification enables more nuanced and targeted interventions to support the change process (Autissier, 2012, p. 10).

Reactions to change are neither uniform nor static; they vary from one individual to another and evolve over time. According to (Pilar, Véronique, & Christine, 2008, p. 70), individuals may initially exhibit various attitudes, such as:

- *Resignation:* expressed through sentiments like: "Why is this happening to me? Why can't things stay the way they were?";
- *Criticism:* characterized by rejection or skepticism: "It won't work. I don't see what the point is";
- *Wait-and-see:* a passive stance marked by uncertainty, as in "I'm waiting to see what happens. I'll see how others react".

The goal of change management is to support individuals as they progress from negative to neutral positions, then toward positive engagement and ownership, culminating in attitudes such as: "I understand and I want to participate. I can help those who are struggling".

I.3. Management of the Change Process: Meaning and Stages

The increasing number of projects initiated in response to an evolving competitive, economic, and technological environment has led companies to adopt more professionalized approaches to both project management and the management of the changes and transformations these projects entail. In pursuit of enhanced project success (both in terms of timeliness and achievement of objectives) companies are paying growing attention to the conditions that foster stakeholder engagement and facilitate the transformation of practices. As such, change management has emerged as a critical success factor in the implementation of business transformation strategies. In response to this strategic imperative, a wide array of theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches, and operational tools have been developed to support organizations in managing change more effectively.

I.3.1. The Core of the Change Process:

To ensure that change management does not remain a merely rhetorical exercise, but instead translates into concrete actions aligned with the strategic challenges of business transformation, Autissier and Moutot (2013) propose an operational model known as the "change cycles." This model is structured around three main phases: change diagnosis, change support and change management. Among these, the support phase is the most widely recognized, as it encompasses the deployment of key change management levers, notably communication, training, and support for transformation.

Derived from project-type change management methods, these levers form the core of what is referred to as the change support phase for the populations concerned. However, these two authors emphasize that, based on their experiences, these levers (when applied in a standardized and uniform manner) are insufficient to ensure stakeholder buy-in and ownership of the change. To address this limitation, they propose the addition of an upstream change diagnosis phase, aimed at identifying the specific needs for change, the populations concerned, and their acceptance level. This diagnostic framework not only offers a clear picture of the current situation but also informs the selection and adaptation of change management levers, enhancing their effectiveness and relevance. They also introduce the concept of participatory workshops as both a standalone lever of change and a facilitating mechanism for the implementation of other levers. However, within an approach where "action is sufficient in itself," change is rarely controlled or managed effectively. One major challenge lies in the difficulty of assessing the actual level of transformation or the current state of change, leading to deficiencies in change management across most of the projects

analyzed by the authors. In response to this observed shortfall, they integrated a two-part management cycle into their model. This two-part management cycle strengthens the operationalization of change management (Autissier & Moutot, 2013, pp. 2,3):

- The first part focuses on managing individuals and resistance, recognizing that individual commitment is the cornerstone of any successful change initiative. While resistance to change is often viewed negatively, the authors advocate a more nuanced approach that considers not only opposition but also the expectations, motivations, and value systems of the individuals involved.
- The second part involves the creation of a change management dashboard, a strategic monitoring tool that aggregates indicators related to the implementation of change initiatives. It includes data on stakeholder positioning, perceived risks, and the progress of the transformations as initially defined by the project scope.

This cyclical management model is crucial because it elevates change management from a purely resource-based process to a results-oriented commitment. It enables organizations to formalize the progress of transformations, assess whether they align with initial objectives.

I.3.2. Actors in the Change Process:

Several authors offer various representations of the configuration of change actors, emphasizing that it is through these individuals that change occurs. It is therefore essential to ensure that each person is assigned to the right role.

Based on different contributions (Aubert-Lotarski, 2014, pp. 12,13), the following roles can be identified:

- *Leadership or sponsorship role:* It is assigned to the individual who will embody the change. The choice of this person is a critical success factor. They are responsible for driving the process forward, mobilizing the various stakeholders by challenging some, recognizing the efforts of others, and demonstrating a sustained commitment to seeing the transformation through to completion.
- *Project team:* The leader surrounds themselves with a project management team, which may include internal or external resources depending on the possibilities. Although not always part of the formal organizational structure, team members are officially mandated by the leader and receive specific training to equip them to lead and embody the change project effectively.
- *Change network role:* This role is carried out by field agents who serve as intermediaries between the change team and the broader organization. These agents maintain close contact with the rest of the agents known "users" or "beneficiaries".

I.3.3. The Stages of Change Management:

Change management has become increasingly professionalized and standardized, becoming a process divided into three key phases: diagnosis, deployment of communication, training, and support mechanisms, and the actual management of change. The effectiveness of a change management process relies on the implementation of all three phases to secure stakeholder buy-in, transform organizational practices, and support the company’s development. The three phases of change management are presented as follows:

I.3.3.1. The Diagnostic Phase: This phase aims to identify the scope of the change, including the affected processes, structures, stakeholders, and the nature of the change itself. It involves establishing a framework to help determine the most appropriate levers for action. Charpentier (2004) outlines a diagnostic model based on three key operations: description, analysis, and prescription. Preparation involves identifying the organizational issues that justify the change. A thorough and systematic description and analysis of these issues, carried out with the participation of employees, leads to the formulation of actionable proposals (Charpentier, 2004, p. 31).

The purpose of the diagnosis is to "take the pulse" of the organization's receptiveness to change. It is important to highlight the value of this step, as it plays a crucial role in understanding change management. The diagnosis functions both as a tool and an approach, built on the basis of perceptions and representations. As such, it serves as an instrument for assessing the organization’s capacity to transform. It provides a snapshot of the current situation, allows it to be compared to a desired future state, and helps evaluate how attainable that target situation is (Pesqueux, 2015, pp. 52,53).

I.3.3.2. The Implementation Phase (Leveraging Phase): Following the diagnostic phase comes the implementation - or leveraging - phase. This stage involves putting the defined plan into action, ensuring that commitments are honored, and recognizing the ongoing need to sustain staff motivation. Communication plays a central role here: it must clearly explain the purpose and

methodology of the project, provide appropriate answers to employees' questions, and keep them informed of any changes that occur throughout the process (Aubert-Lotarski, 2014, p. 15).

This phase consists of planning and executing actions related to communication, training, and transformation support. These actions must be defined based on the diagnosis of the targeted area.

I.3.3.3. The Steering Phase: This phase aims to assess the outcomes of the change management actions implemented during the leveraging phase. Adopting a cybernetic "Actions – Results – Corrections" approach, it is crucial to evaluate whether these actions have led to increased stakeholder buy-in, active participation from beneficiaries, improved information dissemination, and other intended effects. The focus is on measuring both the progress of change and the evolution of activities, as well as determining to what extent the initial objectives of the project have been achieved (Autissier & Moutot, 2013, p. 17).

Steering relies on the development of initiatives, their evaluation and selection, the monitoring of their implementation, as well as training and support. It must be followed by a consolidation phase, which includes two key components: refocusing, involving the evaluation and assessment of actions carried out to ensure consistency across activities; and anchoring, which consists of adjusting the implemented actions to establish lasting and sustainable change (Pesqueux, 2015, p. 48).

I.4. The Role of Communication in the Success of the Change Process:

Contrary to popular belief, communication is not merely about exchanging information. More importantly, it aims to achieve a shared understanding of the situations being experienced. Communication is a continuous process of adjustment, intended to establish and maintain a relationship that evolves in the direction desired by the stakeholders involved. Consider the example of a manager presenting a new process to be implemented in the department. The presentation is impeccable in terms of content; clear, detailed, and well-documented. However, the manager adopts an authoritarian stance and delivers the message in a pontifical tone. After the session, what will the staff react to first? The content of his presentation?

No; rather, they will react to the way of communicating. The relational and interpersonal aspects will take precedence and strongly influence how the content is interpreted. In other words, the staff seeks alignment at the relational level; thus, other concerns - beyond content - dominate and even overshadow it. Alex Mucchielli's research and experience show that, in contexts of change, information-related issues are not the main concern. His findings suggest that if relational adjustment fails to meet the expectations of those involved, the information is not properly received or processed by the intended audience. In short, communication must first address relational dynamics; only then can the information itself be effectively considered, except in emergencies, where content takes precedence (Collerette, Schneider, & Legris, 2003, pp. 50,51).

I.4.1. Communication Content:

Building on the previous considerations, communication can be defined as "*any expressive behavior perceived by the audience*". This implies that all actions taken by leaders form part of the communication process, not just the information explicitly aimed at explaining the change. The credibility of those promoting the change, along with their ability to inspire trust, are crucial factors in ensuring effective communication.

In a study of persuasive leaders, Collerette and her colleagues (2003) identified four common practices among these leaders:

- ✓ Before attempting to influence the target audience, they begin by establishing their own credibility;
- ✓ They structure their objectives to align with a shared frame of reference or work to create one with their interlocutors;
- ✓ They use vivid, concrete language supported by tangible examples;
- ✓ They match their emotional tone to that of their audience.

The authors stress that this is not about "selling" an idea, but about creating the conditions for a shared understanding, striving for alignment and convergence of viewpoints (Collerette, Schneider, & Legris, 2003, p. 52).

Communication should aim to demonstrate that the target is achievable, while not concealing the obstacles that need to be overcome to reach it. The message must be clear and accessible, enabling everyone to understand their role in relation to the project and to anticipate the evolution of their profession (Pilar, Véronique, & Christine, 2008, p. 70).

I.4.2. The Manager: A Key Player in the Communication Process

Managers are frequently asked to clarify the difficulties reported by teams in the context of organizational changes. Indeed, they must juggle between:

- ***Their dual role:*** acting as a liaison between upper management and their teams, while also being employees themselves, often caught between conflicting demands (those of leadership, their teams, and their own);
- ***The constraints of their position:*** heavily focused on operational management, they may have limited capacity to fully understand and address complex work situations.

As essential actors in the implementation of change projects, managers must ensure, both individually and collectively with their teams, that the following elements are addressed:

- Understanding of the change (its meaning);
- Employees' interest in the change (what they gain from it);
- Desire (based on a foundation of trust);
- Capability to implement the change (in terms of required skills).

It is through the shared analysis of work processes and problematic situations that managers can identify and negotiate win-win solutions tailored to their organizational context (Bertin, Jutras, Paljkovic, & Prina, 2011, p. 3).

Research shows that significant improvements in effectiveness are achieved when senior leaders themselves actively engage in promoting change. A study conducted by ProSci involving around 100 companies found that a lack of visible involvement from top leadership was a major contributor to failure. Another study by the same firm, covering 288 organizations across 51 countries, revealed that the most effective sources of communication during change are senior management and immediate supervisors. This distinction is explained by the fact that immediate supervisors have the greatest influence over their employees' day-to-day activities, while senior management holds strategic control over the organization's direction (Collerette, Schneider, & Legris, 2003, p. 52).

In previous generations, managers were primarily expected to ensure the sustainability of existing systems within companies or organizations. Today, however, their main responsibility is to facilitate change. This shift in the managerial role has taken place gradually, but it is now evident that in nearly all organizations, managers and leaders have shifted their focus to change management. Whereas their former mission was to "stabilize the permanent", they are now called upon to support and promote continuous adjustments. This transition marks a shift from a logic of preserving continuity to one centered on driving transformation (Carton, 2011, p. 3).

Our observations align with this perspective: the visible commitment of senior management plays a highly symbolic role in the communication process. In the eyes of employees, their active presence signals that "this change is really important". Conversely, their absence or low visibility is often perceived as a lack of interest, and this is the message that people ultimately retain. We also stress that communication involves creating genuine exchanges and interactions with stakeholders. Reducing the challenge of communication to a mere issue of "information" is therefore a serious oversimplification. The core issue lies in establishing a relationship of trust and maintaining consistent, long-term communication.

II. Analysis and Discussion

This work presents a structured and insightful exploration of change management, emphasizing both the technical and human dimensions of organizational transformation. One of the key contributions lies in its holistic view of the change process, broken down into three essential phases: diagnosis, implementation, and steering. This model provides a clear roadmap for organizations aiming to navigate change effectively.

What distinguishes the work is its insistence on the central role of communication and leadership. Rather than perceiving communication as a mere tool for disseminating information, the work rightly frames it as a relational process that determines whether change will be accepted or rejected. This aligns with contemporary research in organizational behavior, which confirms that emotional intelligence, trust-building, and engagement are as critical as strategic planning. Another strength of this work is its attention to the psychological resistance to change, portraying it not as a threat but as a natural human response that must be understood and managed. The integration of concepts such as symbolic leadership, relational trust, and participatory communication shows a nuanced understanding of the dynamics involved.

In terms of managerial implications, this work underlines the evolving role of managers;

from stabilizers of existing systems to facilitators of change. This shift necessitates new skills and attitudes, especially the capacity to act as intermediaries between strategic objectives and operational realities.

Importantly, this work does not adopt a one-size-fits-all perspective. Instead, it acknowledges the uniqueness of each organizational context, encouraging tailored strategies that consider cultural, structural, and historical specificities. This contextual sensitivity adds practical relevance to the theoretical framework.

III. Conclusion

Organizations that achieve the best results tend to share two key characteristics: first, the ability of managers and teams to implement change rapidly, enabling them to respond effectively to environmental shifts and remain aligned with organizational strategy; and second, a strong commitment to the continuous development of human resources, supported by robust training and communication systems. It is well known that strategy is executed through people; thus, the success of change initiatives depends on securing the engagement and support of stakeholders. This requires a clear, shared vision, the active commitment of leadership, and clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and lines of authority. Change management, therefore, must be understood as a collective and coordinated effort that spans all levels of the organization and benefits from strong senior leadership support. Yet, we must acknowledge that human nature tends to resist leaving a familiar present for an uncertain future. Therefore, we can say that the key to successful change management lies in the ability to construct processes and practices that foster stakeholder engagement, acceptance, and participation. This process *"change management"* aims to identify the environment impacted by change, conduct effective communication and support measures, and continuously monitor the implementation and outcomes of change initiatives.

- **The Results:** Taking into account the preceding considerations, we present the main findings that emerge from this study:

- In light of an increasingly dynamic and especially technological environment, change management has become imperative for all organizations.
- The acceptance of the change initiative by stakeholders is a fundamental condition for the success of the process.
- Communication plays a critical role in ensuring individual acceptance of change. The active presence of senior leadership during dialogue and training sessions significantly enhances the effectiveness of the communication process.
- The primary challenge in communication lies in establishing meaningful exchange and interaction with stakeholders. It is not merely about transmitting information, but about shaping and maintaining the quality of the relationship.
- Resistance to change is a normal and natural state. However, it is essential for individuals to understand that change is not inherently negative, and that every crisis represents both a risk and an opportunity (Crisis = Risk + Opportunity).
- Regardless of the approach adopted, the implementation of a change initiative must take into account the specific characteristics of the organization; its history, culture, structure, and so forth. This requires a nuanced understanding of the organization and the adaptation of behavioral approaches accordingly.
- One of the most critical drivers of change is technology. Over the past two decades, automation has revolutionized work practices. Information technology has not only become a tool for production, but also a powerful means for monitoring and communication.

- **The Suggestions:** Based on the previous findings and our analysis of change management practices, we offer the following suggestions:

- ✓ Conduct an analysis of past change initiatives, with the objective of identifying their positive, negative, and neutral aspects. This retrospective approach enables organizations to draw valuable lessons from previous experiences and avoid repeating the same mistakes.
- ✓ Ensure the initiative and active involvement of senior leadership throughout the change process. Their visible and sustained engagement is essential for fostering credibility, motivating teams, and ensuring alignment with strategic objectives.
- ✓ Establish dedicated teams to lead the change process. These teams should be responsible for assessing employees, identifying individual strengths and areas for improvement, and engaging

in open dialogue about results. Through evaluation and discussion, these teams can help build a shared understanding that supports the achievement of desired transformations.

- ✓ Develop and communicate a clear, stable, specific, positive, and comprehensive vision. This vision must be effectively explained and interpreted for all stakeholders, in order to generate interest, encourage participation, and create alignment around common goals.
- ✓ Define a specific roadmap for change. It is crucial to precisely identify the aspects that will be affected by the change, thereby reinforcing a shared understanding and reducing uncertainty.
- ✓ Implement an effective communication system. Communication should facilitate continuous dialogue, mutual understanding, and feedback among all parties involved in the change effort.
- ✓ Develop the capacity to manage change over time. This includes selecting the most appropriate timing for the introduction of change, in accordance with organizational dynamics, stakeholder readiness, and external conditions.

Finally, we affirm that change is not an exceptional or occasional phenomenon; it is the very essence of our daily professional lives. The way we work must evolve, just as the work itself must be guided and continuously redefined. The central question remains: Can organizations rise to the challenge of change as they once did for production, productivity, and marketing?

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