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A Humanistic Approach to Streamline Organizational Change Initiatives

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to describe the importance of establishing organizational development initiatives during organizational change. The sense of urgency to promote change in the workplace has been a focal point for most organizations in an effort to remain competitive. Unfortunately, the humanistic approach has been exchanged for undeliverable expectations, which has led to dysfunctional organizations throughout America. Therefore, employees are most likely to resist organizational change due to the lack of understanding, or the promotion of undeliverable expectations. In an effort to address these issues, organizational development

interventions are needed in order to streamline organizational change initiatives. A complete analysis and recommendations will be included to promote a positive work environment during organizational change initiatives.

Keywords: Organizational Development, Learning Organizations &Training and Development

Introduction

American firms continue to evolve to stay competitive within a given industry to offer the best possible products\services to customers. This creates a sense of urgency for change for the betterment of the organizational structure. During organizational change initiatives, an organization's work expectations can be unrealistic, which leads to an undesirable work environment for all involved.   This being said, the humanistic approach to management theory, as it relates to organizational development practices, will be evaluated in an effort to streamline organizational change. At the end, recommendations will be offered to minimize the impact of organizational change initiatives for improved work environment.

Humanistic Approach\Organizational Development to Organizational Change

As result of environmental factors associated with change, such as the economy, industry growth, technological changes and changes to demographics, organizations are forced to change with the times. As an organization strategizes for the unexpected, sometimes the humanistic approach to management is lost which can lead to the promotion of unrealistic deliverables in the workplace. The Humanistic Approach to Management is much related to the commonly used humanism theory.   According to Melé (2003), "more specifically, humanism is usually conceived as an outlook to emphasizing common human needs and is concerned with human characteristics" (p. 79).   In similar research Graham (1994) states that "we can never wholly separate the human from the mechanical side" (p. 25). This means that the Humanistic Approach to Management Theory needs to be a part of the organizational change strategic plan.

Through the origins of the Humanistic Approach to Management, Organizational Development theory was established in an effort to address the humanistic approach to management as it relates to organizational change initiatives (Theodore, 2013). As Schein (1985) points out, Organizational Development is planned change that affects different parts of the organization. Its attempt is to align top hierarchy of systems in an effort to increase organizational change effectiveness.

Organizational Change Interventions

A surge of organizational change initiative continues to be the focal point for most organizations. For the sake of survival, certain organizations will strategize to adjust business processes to meet the demands of industry standards. This being said, the human approach to management is not taken into consideration, which leads to failure.   As depicted in figure 1, a study has suggested that 70% of organizational failure is due to organizational change (Maurer, 2010).

Figure 1: Organizational Change Effectiveness

80%	
70%	
60%	
50%	
40%	**Failure 70%**
30%	**Success**
20%	**30%**
10%	
0%	

Success   Failure

Source: Maurer, 2010

As a result of this dilemma, organizational development interventions are needed in order to make adjustments to the overall strategic plan to streamline organizational change initiatives. Argyris and Schon (1978) describe organizational intervention as a process to establish an ongoing relationship with management and subordinates for the purpose of addressing organizational mistakes and incompatibilities, which are attributable to promoting change initiatives that are unrealistic or are not aligned with the organization's mission statement. Part of the problem occurs when the organization develops a powerful "immune system" similar to immunities developed in the human body. As a result, this immunity of resistance defends the status quo and resists changes that are unrecognizable to mid-management and staff alike (Gilley, Gilley, & Godek, 2009).

Causes and Effects of Organizational Change

Most interesting, the causes and effects of organizational change are overwhelming to understand. Based on several literature review studies, Table 1 reflects a list of the failure rates pertaining to organizational change initiatives with the root of the cause remaining unknown. Rosenberg & Mosca (2011) further suggest that the twenty items be grouped in the following manner: 1 through 8 are made up of personal factors for resistance to change, 9 through 18 are based on organizational factors associated to change and 19 and 20 are associated to change in itself (2011).

Table 1: Resistance to Organizational Change

1	Employees' attitudes/disposition toward change
2	Fear of the unknown (uncertainly)
3	Lack of understand of the firm's intentions
4	Fear of failure
5	Disruption of routine
6	Increased workload (As a result of downsizing or reduce workforce)
7	Lack of rewards for implementing change
8	Perceived loss of control, security, or status
9	Poor Leadership
10	Dysfunctional organizational culture
11	Organizational size and rigidity
12	Lack of management support for the change (Firm's commitment to support change in the workplace)
13	Lack of trust between management and employees
14	Inability or unwillingness of management to deal with resistance
15	Lack of Participation due to top-down steering
16	Organizational politics/conflict
17	Internal conflict for resources
18	Lack of consequences for inadequate or poor performance
19	The content of the change (an ill-conceived change/relevance of the goals of change)
20	Poor implementation planning

Source: Rosenberg & Mosca, 2011

Due to global competition and swift change initiatives, strain has been placed on the American manager to produce more with fewer resources. According to Rivero (2013), "…most layoffs were middle managers who worked alongside of line workers; other managers who remained behind were forced to do more with fewer resources, which made it difficult to accomplish day-to-day objectives" (p. 171).   In an effort to deal with staffing shortage problems, it was said that managers developed a "siege mentality" behavior. According to Horstein (1996), a "siege mentality" forces managers to micromanage subordinates to an in effort to stay abreast of day-to-day responsibilities. Unfortunately, this type of behavior leads to brutality leading to mistreatment of others in the workplace by supervisory staff members.

Recommendations

The author of the article proposes the following recommendations in an effort to streamline organizational change in the workplace.

1. Consider incorporating the Humanistic Approach to Management theory within the organizational strategic plan.

2. Establish an open dialogue with management and staff during/before/after organizational change initiatives.
3. Establish a unified team atmosphere that promotes successful organizational change endeavors.
4. Review employees' work expectations on a continuous basis to determine effectiveness.
5. Eliminate inappropriate behavior that promotes a negative work environment as similar to the "siege mentality" theory as depicted in this article.

Conclusion

Although research has suggested that organizational change initiatives are the root of the cause of organizational failure, not enough evidence has been offered cementing this as the main source of the cause. Additionally, organizational change will continue to inspire American firms to compete with competitors within respective markets. This being said, it is vital that empathy toward employees be a focal point of the overall strategic plan. Additionally, it is also suggested that the Humanistic Approach Management be considered when change takes place. By promoting such endeavors, organizational change objectives can be streamlined for successful execution.

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