QUALITIES REQUIRED FOR CHANGE

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ABSTRACT

In the process to survive, organisations are dependent on what happens in their environment in which they operate. There are a number of critical components in the changing role of organisations that are, creating a decision-making culture, the aspects of co-ordination and integration, leadership style element, service delivery element, human resource development and personal dedication. The complexity of change will increase and will ultimately influence every organisation. The manager of the future will have to be skilled in managing change in an ever-changing environment. A future-orientated focus and mentality are required to enable a manager to meet the challenges in an active way instead of a passive way by simply reacting to change.

INTRODUCTION

The last ten years saw the biggest change in the South African context. Political, economical, technological and social events contribute to the perception of the world and the accompanying changes. The development in the technological environment means that the so-called impossible becomes typical day-to-day activities. Change is all around and the ability and capacity to manage change effectively and efficiently is a crucial attribute of the manager in today’s organisations.

Changes in organisations have become a daily event but remain a complex issue, even though the organisation may be fairly newly established. The so-called old organisation, seen as rather rigid and inflexible and not very likely to change or adapt to the changes, is disappearing. An organisation is increasingly seen as a living organism with cyclical behaviour.

This brings one to the question: “What qualities are required for organisations to survive these changes, which are mostly externally initiated?” In order to have a clear understanding of these functions an analysis of the typical characteristics of organisations; the qualities of managers required to manage changing organisations effectively and efficiently; the requirements for organisations to survive and lastly what managers can
do to improve the changes of success will be discussed. Public employees function in an environment where there is no bottom line, where tasks are more complex and ambiguous; where uncertainties are more prevalent; where relationships are more complex; where problems are more difficult; and where mistakes – real or perceived – are more exposed to public criticism.

**ELEMENTS OF CHANGING ORGANISATIONS**

In the typical open-system approach organisations are seen as systems comparable to biological systems, that is living organisms. In the process to survive, organisations are clearly dependent on what happens in their environment in which they operate. Organisations cannot survive in a system where isolation is the order of the day and furthermore organisations cannot be studied in an isolated manner (Ten Have *et al.*, 2003: 41-43).

The open-system approach does not prescribe the one and only way of being organised. When there are changes in the environment, the characteristics of the environment will be different, their internal structures and mode of operation will also be different. The organisation is in a directly or indirectly manner in a permanent mode of communication with the environment. It is clear that the dynamics come from outside the organisation and mostly in a political, economical, social or technological format.

In order for an organisation to handle challenges and problems it is of the utmost importance to develop the skills of the employees. Skilled and knowledgeable employees will create a flexible organisation which can handle challenges and problems in a more matured manner and thus deliver the services which is required from them.

The following elements fulfill a vital role in the changing of organisations.

**Decision-making culture**

A decision-making culture is the way in which decisions are made and the way in which agreements are reached (Roux, *et al.*, 1996: 121-126). A question of importance to ask is: Are all employees involved in the decision-making process? In this case decision-making can be divided into three distinct categories:

- on the basis of an order;
- on the basis of consultation; and
- on the basis of consensus.

In terms of decision-making on the basis of an order it takes place through the management without consultation with others. Decision-making on the basis of consultation means that decisions are taken after or in consultation with a certain group of people (i.e. employees in the case of organisational change). This particular group of people could be seen as having knowledge of the issue at hand or to have a particular interest in a certain decision. With reference to decision-making on the basis of consensus it means that a decision can only be formalized after all the people i.e. employees involved have on a particular principle agreed with the decision.
Coordination and integration

The manner in which coordination and integration take place between the different units of an organisation, is an indication of the functioning of the organisation. The commonality of interests among parts of the organisation is not to be found in more rules and procedures. It should be established in which areas a mutual dependency exists. A clear assignment of responsibility is an absolute requirement for success (Stuart-Kotze, 2006: 4).

The existence of a common vision and goal for the organisation as a whole will be a strong binding factor. The availability of an own culture within different units of the organisation and the establishment of sound co-operation among the different units of an organisation, with sometimes different cultures within, require a constant steering, turning and control (Hindle, 2003: 156-157). To have a strong hierarchy is an organisational phenomenon, but the manner and extent to which the hierarchy is structured is also a cultural phenomenon.

Leadership style element

Leadership has an important influence on the culture of an organisation. A leader formulates and develops particular values and norms that form the guidelines for the employees in the organisation. It is essential for employees that the vision is stimulated and implemented (Stuart-Kotze, 2006: 51-52).

Service delivery attitude

A service delivery should be closely related to the organisation’s culture. Service delivery attitude or client-oriented attitude is to be open for, and be orientated towards, the needs that exist among the clients (Common, et al., 1992:127). Therefore, it is important that an organisation develops a feeling of personal responsibility towards the clients in respect of service delivery.

HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND PERSONAL DEDICATION

Organisational culture is influenced by its structure; that is the quality and quantity of the employees with the essential knowledge and skills, which can also influence the culture of the organisation. The successful functioning of an organisation will depend on the acceptability of the values and norms of the organisation by the employees working within the organisation. Therefore a clear vision is a critical component in terms of personal development and dedication (Brown, et al., 2000: 240-241).

The Vision element

For a successful organisation it is important that the employees have a clear and recognizable vision regarding the direction or mandate of the organisation. The agreed on
vision must be in line with the values of the organisation. The accepted vision must also contain the manner in which the organisation honours the human capital. A clear vision is of critical importance.

**Flexibility element**

Flexibility is the manner in which an organisation is able to adapt the dedication of employees and to the demands of the continuously changing environment. This area is an important factor. The organisation of the future has to deal with an unstable environment and will have a different appearance from the present organisation. In order to adapt to the developments in the organisation, society and the world, requires a flexible attitude. This attitude not only applies to employees, but to organisations as well (Stuart-Kotze, 2006: 121-123).

**Adaptability element**

Adaptability falls within the same area as flexibility. Adaptability means an ability to adapt to new situations, to new challenges, to new opportunities. Organisations can survive only if they understand what is required by their clients. Adaptability does not mean coming to a standstill, but understanding how to manage or how to cope with the uncertainties regarding future operations.

The elements highlighted above are applicable to a profitable and a non-profitable organisation. It is important to note that in each organisation there are two kinds of issues to be taken into consideration: the production of goods and services, and the generating of power and knowledge skills that will enable the production process to be efficient and effective. Current organisations are faced with distinguishable phenomena; changes in the environment are dynamic. Changes are frequent and intensive, implying that the cycles between the delivery of goods and services are becoming shorter, requiring shorter reaction time.

The constant changes in the environment results in skills and knowledge becoming outdated. The learning capacity and ability of the organisation must keep abreast with the speed of change in the environment.

**QUALITIES NEEDED FOR GROWTH AND CHANGE**

Growth in an organisation traditionally was through a relatively stable process. Due to the changes in the political, economical, social and technological environment organisations have to adapt to the pressures of the world since as open systems they are becoming more and more part of the world outside.

Human beings live in times of dynamic change. The complexity of change will increase and will ultimately influence every organisation. Social and technological evolutions as well as rapid developments in the information technology lead to drastic changes. The aforementioned cause a shock for the fundamental opinions to which
managers and organisations have become accustomed to. The manager of the future will have to be skilled to manage change in an ever-changing environment. No organisation can expect to have a certain future, for as scientific and technological developments, forming the bases on which each organisation has learned to operate can change quickly and drastically. The manager of the future will be compelled to anticipate these developments and leadership skills are primary requirements.

A future-oriented focus and mentality are required to enable a manager to meet the challenges in an active way instead of in a passive way by simply reacting to change. There are still too many government departments, which are led on the basis of events that have taken place in the past. An anticipating approach requires of a manager to (Stuart-Kotze, 2006: 185-188):

- look into the future;
- see problems and possibilities as challenges;
- find ways to turn negative developments into positive ones as a result of which new possibilities are created; and
- grasp these new possibilities and implement them.

First-class leadership will be required in all units of an organisation. However, these should not only be formalised in a hierarchical leadership, but also through informal and charismatic leadership. The process of growth of such a leadership style will increasingly be identified with the capacity to mobilize the workforce and to foster the dedication of the employees to face new challenges. This should be realised by means of generally accepted norms and values within the organisation. Communication with employees to obtain consensus and not ordering them is the vital component in the current views on adaptability (Savoie, 1998: 227).

Information is becoming a critical component. Societies are orientated towards information and communication. Human resource management will become even more important for the organisation. Managers then have to look for opportunities and possibilities to develop and mobilise the intelligence, the knowledge and creativity of their employees.

In terms of the traditional economy the important production factors are of natural resources, labour and capital. However, currently knowledge, creativity, utilizing opportunities, human skills and entrepreneurship are as important as the traditional production factors.

One of the cornerstones of the old organisation theory was for an organisation to operate in terms of a strong hierarchical structure. In terms of the hierarchical structure concepts such as span of control, direct lines of authority and supervision were dominant. As the cornerstones on which the hierarchical structures were built are removed, the manager has to co-ordinate actions of employees by means of the development of shared values and common understanding of the goals to be achieved. The managers have to find the right balance between delegation of the authority to subordinates and supervision to ensure optimal performance of duties.

In order to survive in the changing environment, managers are seeking simplicity. However the reality is that they have to face complexity. Complexity emerges from
the conflicting demands created by a multiplicity of interested parties or stakeholders. Therefore, managers have to be involved in a number of matters at the same time as well as the seemingly never-ending transitional phase in which organisations are captured (Peters, 1998: 173-182). To cope with these situations, managers of the future have to develop a management-mentality and technique, which will enable them to handle uncertainty and unclear situations. Situations for which there are no clear distinct action programmes.

The impression may have been created that organisations are permanently on the move and subject to change. The top management in contemporary organisations requires technical skills, but more importantly social skills to motivate their employees. Employees need the authority to support their supervisors and to confront them with their opinions should they differ on strategic issues. A strong feeling has to be developed among employees to accept a social responsibility for public sector actions. The need, therefore, is not only to promote high ethical standards, but also in a complex and rapidly changing and interrelated dependent society, implement policies to reflect the social values of society.

**REQUIREMENTS FOR ORGANISATIONS TO SURVIVE**

It might seem to be negative to state that organisations require strategies to survive, but actually it means that organisations have to be able to cope with reality. The global village idea creates a permanent pressure on organisations and employees to change. A kind of wave movement is required to accommodate changes. Waves follow each other: e.g. centralisation-decentralisation; centralization; subsidiarity and differentiation and concentration; policy formulation and policy implementation; matrix or staff-line construction; a flat or a hierarchical structure. There is no apparent logical order in these alternatives. These phenomena bounce back and forth from time to time. It should be noted that these movements between different structural arrangements are partly governed by external and partly by internal situations.

An important condition for survival requires learning how to deal with changes. The experience indicates that organisations are not able to cope with rapidly induced changes since they are not sensitive to the ever-changing environment. That is not only the case with the service to be delivered, but also with the composition of the structure (Ten Have, et al., 2003: 81-85).

Most people are afraid of change. This seems to be part of human nature. Openness and communication should be transparently present in an organisation. A situation should be created and maintained to avoid employees feeling threatened. Should employees feel threatened, changes will be more difficult to realise.

To attain real changes, it is important that actions are geared to break through existing fixed patterns and conventions that may cause resentment. The top executive of the organisation is a change agent par excellence. Resistance against changes in organisations is mostly found on the middle-management level. This is due to the fact that middle-level management levels are often caught between the senior management’s demands and their subordinate’s capacity. To whom does middle-level management listen? Do they listen to top-management or to pressures from the subordinates? The top-management
gives orders but the subordinates have the tendency to avoid orders if they are not convinced about its real value.

The middle-level manager performs a key function. If the middle-level manager is not sufficiently involved in the process of change, the expected change may be thwarted. An important characteristic of the human resource function is to ensure that the middle-level manager operates in a flexible managerial environment (Brown, et al., 2000: 14-16).

Information forms a key component to facilitate change. To keep the employees informed regarding possible organisational changes is important. Workshops or seminars where the new vision and goals are discussed and analysed, are means to enlarge the dynamics of the organisation.

To give the employees responsibility, create a number of unexpected qualities. To make employees responsible seems to be the most important factor in organisations to ensure excellence in service delivery. A service delivery approach as primary goal will allow the organisation to survive and flourish. Employees who take responsibility for their actions are able to change in time with the dynamics of service delivery, organisational needs and the requirements for the demands of the environment.

Attention to education and training is another key component. The acquiring of social skills should be part of such education and training programmes. Skills in the area of communication, writing, speaking, listening, meeting and negotiating are essential to obtain effective results and be cost efficient.

SUCCESSFUL CHANGES

Techniques and skills are required to manage change with confidence, sensitivity and expertise. To be ahead of the change, skills are required in a dynamic and continuously changing environment. In order for an organisation to be sustainable, managers could adopt the following approach:

Organisational Analysis

The organisational analysis will identify the problems and weaknesses or strengths in the organisation in the following areas:

- Management process including
  - management style
  - co-ordination of work
  - organisational structures
- Human resource management including
  - career development
  - motivation
  - merit assessment
- Service rendering system including
  - improvement process
  - information and technological aids.
This analysis is important to determine at which level the abovementioned processes and functions are operating. The analysis will provide the opportunity to identify the gaps and address the changes required to make sure that the organisation is in a position to follow a pro-active approach.

**Strategic management at all levels**

Strategic management is concerned with making decisions about the organisation’s future direction to implement those decisions. Strategic management can be broken down into two phases: strategic planning and strategic implementation. Strategic planning is concerned with making decisions with regard to (Hindle, 2003: 209):

- determining the vision and mission of the department;
- formulating policies to guide the department in establishing objectives, selecting a strategy and implementing the selected strategy;
- establishing long- and short-range objectives to achieve the mission of the department; and
- determining the strategy that is to be used in achieving the objectives of the department.

Strategy implementation is concerned with making decisions with regard to
- developing a structure to achieve the strategy;
- ensuring that the activities necessary to accomplish the strategy are performed effectively; and
- monitoring the effectiveness of the strategy in achieving the objectives of the department.

The goal of a department defines the activities performed or intends to perform. The kind of department it intends to be also has a direct effect on its activities. Policies are guides to action that outline the framework within which objectives are established and strategies are selected and implemented. Long-range objectives specify the results that are desired in pursuing the department’s mission and normally extend beyond the current financial year of the department. Short-term objectives are performance targets, normally of less than one year’s duration. These are used by management as targets to achieve the long-term objectives.

The monitoring of the implementation processes are critical components in the drive for successful operation. No matter how effective a job is performed selecting a strategy, sometimes unexpected developments occur during implementation. Only carefully monitoring the process makes it possible to deal with the unexpected in a timely fashion and react to it effectively.

To function as an effective department it is important that (Schutte, 2000: 6-8):
- clear missions and objectives are emphasized, widely communicated and understood throughout the department;
- employees in the department must see it as special because of its operations and take pride in this;
management must place great value on the people in the department, on treating them fairly and respectfully and conduct open and honest, informal communication with them;

management has to emphasize delegation of responsibility and authority as widely and as far down in the organisation as possible; i.e. to strive to involve as many employees as possible in decisions and activities;

job tasks and goals should be clear, and employees should receive feedback on their performance while good performance should earn recognition and rewards;

the handling of jobs, participation, and human resource management aim at challenging employees and to develop their enthusiasm and commitment; and

employees are empowered by giving them challenging responsibilities and encourage them to participate in decisions, i.e. provide a reason for working to develop strategy, mission and work culture to find opportunities for involving and stimulating workers.

CONCLUSION

Government departments are normally characterised as inflexible which creates in essence a stable environment, but leads in the end towards inflexibility and inefficiency. The viewpoint is that government does not make profit and the influence of the political factor is no longer the primary issue since departments are operating in a global environment that demands adaptability change. Concerning the organisation and the employee there are no major differences since most of the differences are partial. A government department will probably exist longer even if a particular service is no longer required, but in the end such a department also disappears with restructuring or incorporation with another department.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


