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Change Readiness of Managers in Indian Telecom Sector : A Comparison in B2C and B2B Companies

Shivinder Phoolka
Assistant Professor,
Punjabi University Regional Centre for IT and Management,
Mohali, Rajasthan, India

Abstract

This is an empirical paper which measures the change readiness of executives or managers working in the Indian telecom sector. Organization change is something which is bound to happen and is happening at a very fast pace. But very few attempts are made to assess or measure how ready the employees are for that imminent change. If any organization wants to successfully implement its change processes, it must feel the pulse of the employees. It must try to gauge how ready the employees are for that change processes and then try to implement those systems which can increase the change readiness of the employees. This paper measures how ready the executives in the telecom sector are for the first order changes and the second order changes that are occurring in the industry. The researcher tries to find out if there is any difference in the change readiness of the executives of the B2B and B2C companies.

Keywords: Change Readiness, B2B, B2C, First Order Change, Second Order Change.

Introduction

Any change in the policies, procedures, practices, systems, methods, techniques, technology, structure, processes or strategies of an organization is called organizational change. Internal pressures or external environment changes are the causes for organizational change. The external environment is so disruptive that no organization can exist without making relevant changes in its internal environment. And whenever changes or transitions or transformations occur in organizations, employees are the first to feel the heat. They need to prepare themselves accordingly. They cannot resist the changes blindly and forever, rather they have to be part of, become active and participate in the change processes. They have to exhibit readiness for change. Change Readiness is the state of being mentally, emotionally and physically prepared for the changes that are occurring or are bound to occur in the future. The definition for readiness includes “the preparation of a gun for immediate aim and firing” or “armed and ready,” but perhaps being “at peace and ready” is a more productive stance when confronting change. (Jeniffer Walinga, 2008). Indeed, in a review of the literature, Bouckenooghe (2010) concluded that over 90% of conceptual work on change attitudes has been conducted on either change readiness or resistance to change.

First Order Change vs Second Order Change

First order change involves adjustments in systems, processes, procedures, methods or structures, but it does not involve fundamental change in strategy, core values, or corporate identity of the organization. It is carrying on with the past activities with focus on improving what was already being done. First order change can be reversible. First order changes presume the utility of established organizational frames, and serve to tacitly reinforce present understandings, including the status quo configuration of interests and interest groups (Bartunek and Moch, 1987).It maintains the organization as it is by making adaptive changes for the better working of the organization. It requires individual initiative at local level. The other names for first order change are transactional, evolutionary, incremental, adaptive and continuous change. According to Burke & Litwin (1992) changes in management practices, policies and procedures, changes in work unit climate, change in task requirement, change in location, personnel, skill, team membership and conditions of service etc. are the transactional changes which can bring first order change. The second order change alters the fundamental nature of the organization to survive in a dynamic and hypercompetitive environment. It is irreversible in nature and requires behavioural changes. It is difficult for most organizations to achieve (Weick & Quinn, 1999). It is the complex change that goes beyond existing paradigms and requires new knowledge and skills. Second order changes go beyond augmenting or streamlining existing frames and processes, and involve shifting to radically different assumptions and mode of operation, with the shift reflecting a discontinuity and a replacement of the status quo (Gash & Orlikowski,1991). The other names for second change are transformational, revolutionary, radical, disruptive and discontinuous change. Reger et al.(1994) has defined downsizing, restructuring, and reengineering as transformational changes, because they fundamentally alter the basic nature of the organization. Palmer et al. (2009) says downsizing, implementation of new technology, mergers and acquisitions are second order changes. Taking insights from studies of Whittington et al (1999), Palmer and co- researchers describe delayering, decentralization, HR practices, downscoping, outsourcing, alliances as second-order, transformational changes, which are needed to produce a fundamental reorientation of an organization.

Review of Literature

Chutima, Morgan & Griego (1998) studied the relationships between readiness for change and margin in life (which is determined by the load and power) and demographic variables of employees of a manufacturing company and found that the demographic variables like the department in which the employee worked, position of the employee and the experience of the employee were related to readiness for change but not to margin in life. They also supported that employees who gained more personal power than burden from their relations with their managers were more ready for changes. It was also found that employees in managerial positions had higher change readiness as compared to employees in non managerial positions. Vaara (2000) studied the making of cultural differences in post-merger change processes in eight Finnish-Swedish merger cases. It was found that fear of change, anger and other negative emotions easily lead to cultural confrontation whereas positive emotions are linked with cultural attachment. One intriguing discovery was that representatives of specific cultures have significant power in the internal debates due to their superior knowledge of the beliefs and practices in the organization culture in question. Bauer and Bender (2002) analyzed the effects of technological and organizational changes on gross job and worker flows. One of the findings of the study was that technological change did not affect gross job and worker flows significantly. If anything, new information technologies seemed to increase were the churning rates among professionals and engineers. Tredway (2004) studied the relationship between change readiness scores and learning of individuals in an organization undergoing a complex change like, merger and acquisition. The change readiness scores in the organization were lower before acquisition. The scores improved after the change process with the help of learning interventions. The change readiness scores of the managers above 45 years of age were more than those in the age range, under twenty-five and twenty five to forty five. Vakola and Nikolaou (2005) studied the attitudes of employees towards organizational change and the role of employees' stress and commitment in organizational change. The results suggested that employees who were under high stress showed lower commitment to change and were reluctant to accept interventions introduced in name of organizational change. The factor which showed the greatest impact on the attitude of employees towards change was poor relationships at work suggesting that unhealthy relationships at workplace can reduce the change readiness of the employees. Almost all occupational stressors were related to negative attitudes to change. Stress created by bad work relationships, overload, unfair pay and benefits can cause negative attitudes toward organizational change and, therefore, inhibit change processes. More specifically, lack of a socially supportive environment, as expressed by bad work relationships, was found to be the strongest predictor of negative attitudes towards change. Tayal (2006) studied the turnaround process in the banking sector with focus on The Bank of Rajasthan Ltd. The research, in two parts, studied the decline of the Bank and then it's turnaround. The decline, turnaround and perceptions thereon were studied with respect to the following change levers: Leadership, Strategy, Structure, Human Resource Management Practices, Technology, Marketing, Quality and Costs. Perception on the impact of each of these in the Decline and Turnaround of the Bank was sought. Leadership and Structure emerged to be the strongest factors responsible for the decline of the Bank as per the perception of the employees. Technology turned out to be the most significant of the change levers responsible for turnaround with Marketing being the second reason. Training and Rewarding for Change was found to have a positive impact on the image of the bank with the employees. Manipulation, as a means of implementing change, has a negative effect on this image. Armenakis, Harris, Cole, Fillmer & Self (2007) provided a five-sentiment framework which provides a useful and reliable tool for coding interview responses to a change process. The five sentiments are: discrepancy, appropriateness, efficacy, principal support and valence. 'Discrepancy' is the term used when describing a deviation from acceptable performance. Discrepancy captures the sentiment that a need for change exists. The employees must identify that discrepancy exists and should have faith that the specific organizational change which is being proposed will effectively work to remove that discrepancy in order to support change. This second sentiment is labeled 'appropriateness', i.e, if the change is suitable or not. The third sentiment is labelled 'efficacy' and is defined as confidence in one's personal and organizational abilities to successfully implement the organizational change. 'Principal support' is defined as the belief that change agent(s), organizational leaders, one's immediate manager and one's respected peers demonstrate that they support the organizational change and are motivated to see it through to success. 'Valence' refers to the perceived personal benefit (or personal loss) one may reasonably expect as a result of an organizational change. DaSilva & Wetzel (2007) conducted a study among employees in eight organizations which underwent organizational changes, to gauge the reactions of these employees towards these changes. Privatization had taken place in four of the eight organizations and the employees felt that this event had a major impact on them. Though different kinds of organizational changes were taking place in these organizations, but the employees felt that there were some similar outcomes of these changes. The work had intensified; work had larger volume, teams had become smaller and the responsibilities of the employees had increased. The jobs had become vulnerable, less stable and job insecurity had increased. Due to these reasons the employees felt that their psychological contract with the organizations had weakened. They felt work had become more chaotic and they felt loss of control over time. Institutional time had taken priority over interaction time with colleagues and self time. Employees also felt pressurized in the new work settings to give up part of their family duties, leaving them to other members of the family like to the spouse or to grandparents or some other relative. This also lead to reorganization of family time. Kaur (2007) studied organizational change and its impact on employee job satisfaction and customer satisfaction in a few selected public sector banks (State Bank of India and Punjab National Bank) in and around Chandigarh. It was inferred that the most important change lever in which maximum number of changes were sought was technology. Education and training, involvement and participation of employees were found out to be good means to implement and manage organizational change effectively. It was found that overcoming fierce competition prevalent in the market was the main cause of changes. The banks faced competition from the new private sector and foreign banks in the market. It was also inferred that the main cause for resistance to change was the culture and the strategy of the bank and also lack of time and resources. The study measured the level of job satisfaction before and after the change initiatives. Significant differences were observed in the satisfaction levels of employees of both the banks before and after the change initiatives. The same was observed for the customers. Hallgrímsson (2008) studied the change readiness of employees in three organizations in Iceland during times of proposed merger. He found that employees who reported high levels of job satisfaction reported higher levels of change readiness. Employees who reported high levels of uncertainty at time of change reported lower levels of change readiness. Employees who had high levels of organizational commitment also showed higher levels of change readiness. Findings suggested that employees' change readiness is reflected in the attitudes of executive managers. Findings also suggested that employees and executive managers in organizations facing discontinuous or radical change did not report lower levels of change readiness, than those facing incremental organizational change. Susanto (2008) studied the change readiness of employees in a manufacturing company in Indonesia. Change readiness measurement was judged on seven aspects, namely perception towards change effort, understanding the vision for change, mutual trust and respect, change initiatives, management support, acceptance to change, managing change. Observing all seven aspects of change readiness, obtained ranks were as follows: (starting with the highest score): Acceptance to Change-3.34, Change Initiatives-3.26, Managing Change-3.2, Management Support for Change-3.04, Perceptions toward Change Effort-2.84, Mutual Trust and Respect-2.82, Understanding the Vision for Change-2.46. Dijk & Dick (2009) investigated the employee resistance process in law firm mergers. Working within a social identity framework, a merger can be seen as the creation of a new overarching identity for group members, with the fusion of two organizations between an ingroup and a former outgroup into a larger unit. It was found that employee resistance to change can be understood as a response to a perceived threat posed to their work-based identity by the change processes. Organizational change has an impact on employees' work-based identities, and where this poses a threat to their positive social identity, employees respond through resistance. Neves (2009) tested the proposed readiness for change model during the implementation of a new performance appraisal system in a Portuguese public university. The proposed model suggested that self efficacy and appropriateness of change affect the employee's affective commitment to change which further affects his level of individual change and turnover intentions. It was found that change appropriateness was positively related to affective commitment to change and that affective commitment to change mediated the relationship between change appropriateness and both individual change and turnover intentions. Contrary to expectations, self-efficacy did not present a significant relationship with affective commitment to change while self-efficacy presented a direct negative relationship with turnover intentions. Barber (2010) studied the relationship between the change readiness of the frontline workers towards transformational changes that took place in a not for profit nursing home and their demographic factors, organizational commitment, organizational support and supervisor support. Demographics were not found to be significantly related to their change readiness whereas positive correlations existed between change readiness, organizational commitment and supervisor support. N. Shah & Barrera (2011) examined the relationship between organizational commitment, job satisfaction, demographic variables, and readiness for change of the employees of a public service utility. It was found that there were significant correlations between readiness for change organizational commitment, job satisfaction and demographic variables. Choi & Ruona (2011) stated that individual readiness for organizational change reflects the concept of *unfreezing* proposed by Lewin and is critical to successful change implementation. Understanding the conditions which are conducive to individual readiness for organizational change, instead of focusing on traditional emphasis on resistance to change, can be useful for designing and implementing effective human resource and organization development (HROD) interventions. They suggested that individuals are more likely to have higher levels of readiness for organizational change when (a) they experience normative-reductive change strategies and when (b) they perceive their work environment to have the characteristics associated with a learning culture. Mangundjaya (2012) conducted a study to identify the relationship and impact between organizational commitments, employee engagement to individual readiness to change. The study was done in four financial companies, that consist of three private owned banks and one government owned financial company. The results showed that both organizational commitment and employee engagement are positively related and have contributed to individual readiness to change. The results also showed that the correlation of organizational commitment is stronger than employee engagement to individual readiness to change.

Research Methodology

In this study titled, "Change Readiness of Managers in Indian Telecom Sector: A comparison in B2C and B2B Companies", exploratory research has been done first and then followed the descriptive research for the latter to be more effective. This study has been restricted to the telecom sector in the states of Punjab, Haryana and Union Territory of Chandigarh. The study covers Network Service Provider Companies and Vendor Companies. The former are business to customer companies and the latter are business to business companies. The sample in this study has been selected using stratified random sampling technique. The two types of companies are considered as two strata for this study. From each stratum, seven companies were selected randomly. Further from each company, 30 executives/managers were selected randomly. That makes a total sample size of 420. But not all the questionnaires were received back. A total of 401 questionnaires were complete in all respects and were received. The research tool used for the present study is a self-administered questionnaire. The scale which consists of twenty five questions measures the Change Readiness of the executives. These statements represent different change situations in the telecom sector. These statements are categorized into two groups. Group one consists of 12 statements which represent First Order Changes. The second group consists of 13 statements which represent Second Order Changes. This categorization has been done according to the categorization and the definitions of first order organizational change and second order organizational change provided by Burke and Litwin(1992), Palmer and Dunford (1997) and Whittington et al. (1999) and other researchers. The questionnaire has been tested for reliability and validity.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the change readiness of managers/executives in telecom sector.
2. To study the difference, if any, in the change readiness of managers in B2B and B2C companies.

Hypothesis

H_1

There will be significant differences among the mean scores of Network Service Provider (B2C) and Vendor Companies (B2B) executives' Total Change Readiness, Change Readiness for first order changes and Change Readiness for second order changes.

Analysis and Discussion

Change Readiness of the Executives for First Order Changes

The Change Readiness for first order changes of the executives has been divided into three categories, i.e., Low, Average and High. The executives, who score less than 43, fall in the 'Low' category; executives who score between 43 to 49, fall in the 'Average' category and the executives who score more than 49 fall in the 'High' category. 80 executives, i.e., 19.95% of the executives have low Change Readiness for first order changes; 206 executives, i.e., 51.37% of the executives have average Change Readiness and 115 executives, i.e., 28.68% of the executives have high Change Readiness for such changes. This shows majority of the executives in the telecom sector have average Change Readiness for first order changes. If seen strata wise, in Vendor Companies, out of 200 executives; 30 executives, i.e., 15% of the executives have low Change Readiness for first order changes; 118 executives, i.e., 59% of the executives have average Change Readiness and 52 executives, i.e., 26% of the executives have high Change Readiness for first order changes . In Network Service Provider companies out of 201 executives; 50 executives, i.e., 24.88% of the executives have low Change Readiness for first order changes; 88 executives, i.e., 43.78% of the executives have average Change Readiness and 63 executives, i.e., 31.34% of the executives have high Change Readiness for first order changes .

Change Readiness of the Executives for Second Order Changes

The Change Readiness for second order changes of the executives has been divided into three categories, i.e., Low, Average and High. The executives, who score less than 43, fall in the 'Low' category; executives who score between 43 to 50, fall in the 'Average' category and the executives who score more than 50 fall in the 'High' category. 90 executives, i.e., 22.44% of the executives have low Change Readiness for second order changes; 214 executives, i.e., 53.37% of the executives have average Change Readiness and 97 executives, i.e., 24.19% of the executives have high Change Readiness for such changes. This shows majority of the executives in the telecom sector have average Change Readiness for second order changes too. If seen strata wise, in Vendor Companies, out of 200 executives; 39 executives, i.e., 19.5% of the executives have low Change Readiness for second order changes; 124 executives, i.e., 62% of the executives have average Change Readiness and 37 executives, i.e., 18.5% of the executives have high Change Readiness for second order changes . In Network Service Provider companies out of 201 executives; 51 executives, i.e., 25.37% of the executives have low Change Readiness for second order changes; 90 executives, i.e., 44.78% of the executives have average Change Readiness and 60 executives, i.e., 29.85% of the executives have high Change Readiness for second order changes.

Comparing the overall readiness for first order changes with the overall readiness for the second order changes of the executives, it can be seen that executives score less on readiness for the second order changes. The reason can be that second order changes are transformation, have far reaching effects and require behavioural changes. The implication is second order changes should be dealt with care, employees need to be fully informed and their participation should be sought. What is usually seen in organizations is that second order changes are more announced like policies and therefore they create doubt, fear and apprehension in the minds of the employees.

Total Change Readiness scores of the Executives

The Total Change Readiness of the executives has been divided into three categories, i.e., Low, Average and High. The executives, who score less than 87, fall in the 'Low' category; executives who score between 87 to 98, fall in the 'Average' category and the executives who score more than 98 fall in the 'High' category. As can be seen in the table 5.7, 80 executives, i.e., 19.95% of the executives have low Change Readiness; 207 executives, i.e., 51.62% of the executives have average Change Readiness and 114 executives, i.e., 28.43% of the executives have high Change Readiness. This shows majority of the executives in the telecom sector have either average or high Change Readiness scores. This represents a positive scenario as executives are either averagely or highly ready for the organizational changes. This also shows a scope of improvement. The implication is that the readiness of the executives can further be improved through their involvement, participation and a two way communication. If seen strata wise, in Vendor Companies, out of 200 executives; 35 executives, i.e., 17.5% of the executives have low Change Readiness; 115 executives, i.e., 57.5% of the executives have average Change Readiness and 50 executives, i.e., 25% of the executives have high Change Readiness. In Network Service Provider companies out of 201 executives; 45 executives, i.e., 22.39% of the executives have low Change Readiness; 92 executives, i.e., 45.77% of the executives have average Change Readiness and 64 executives, i.e., 31.84% of the executives have high Change Readiness .

Change Readiness scores strata-wise

Employees mainly represented two types of companies, i.e., Network Service Providers (NSP) and Vendor Companies.

Though employees working in Network Service Provider Companies showed more Total Change Readiness (M=93.62, SD=11.84) as compared to their counterparts working in Vendor Companies (M=92.40, SD=9.30), but that difference did not come out to be statistically significant {$F(1,399) = 1.32$, $p>0.05$}. Similarly, no significant difference has been found out between the Change Readiness for first order changes for executives of two company types. Same results have been found out for the Change Readiness for second order changes. This shows executives form Vendor Companies and Network Service Provider companies are similarly prepared for first order changes as well as second order changes. The reason for this can be that similar kind of change is sweeping in both types of companies in the telecom sector. Hence the hypothesis, H_1 that there will be significant differences among the mean scores of Network Service Provider and Vendor Companies executives' Total Change Readiness, Change Readiness for first order changes and Change Readiness for second order changes is rejected.

Conclusion and Recommendations

1. Measuring and improving the individual Change Readiness of the executives should be the precursor to introduction of change programmes. This can give an idea about how the executives view the impending change, what are the fears and apprehensions in their minds. Their Change Readiness can be measured through scale used in this study and other similar scales available.
2. Change Management Programmes should be conducted frequently and at regular intervals in the organizations to explain the need and importance of organizational change and to improve the participation and Change Readiness of executives. Before introducing major changes in the organizations, the Change Readiness of the executives can be measured and they can be better prepared for such changes.
3. Majority of the executives in the telecom sector have average or high Change Readiness scores. This represents a positive scenario as executives are either averagely or highly ready for the organizational changes. This also shows a scope of improvement. The implication is that the readiness of the executives can further be improved through their involvement, participation and a two way communication process. Training programmes should be organized in which they can gain information and knowledge regarding the change which is going to take place. This can improve the Change Readiness of the executives which will further help them to contribute more effectively to their organizations and will also be

helpful in successful implementation of organizational change.

4. Some organizational changes are transactional, other are transformational. Not both have similar effects. Interventions, such as holding of interactive sessions, panel discussions, feedback sessions, parallel learning structures should be developed and introduced in organizations to increase readiness for both kinds of changes, i.e., first order changes and second order changes. In this study it was found that Change Readiness of executives was less for second order changes. The implication is that second order changes should be dealt with care, employees need to be fully informed and their participation should be sought. What is generally seen in organizations is that second order changes more announced like policies and therefore create doubt, fear and apprehension in the minds of the employees.

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