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SOCIAL ENGINEERING AND INTRODUCING CHANGES IN AN ORGANIZATION

This article concentrates on the process of transition from the established reality to the situation of promoting the necessity of changes. This stage, called "defrosting", is a critical point for the success of any planned undertakings. It is connected with the issue of social engineering, which is interesting because of both the theoretical and especially its practical aspects.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the conditions of market economy there is a need of continuous and active adapting of an organization to the changeable reality. To make this process effective, but at the same time generating as little conflict as possible, it has to be accompanied by the consent of organizational community. This is why the critical point of introducing changes – to quote K. Lewin's terminology of the classical theory of change – is recognized as "defrosting", that is the expiring of hitherto dominant values, attitudes and behaviours, and opening up the members of organizations for the unknown, arousing readiness for accepting planned undertakings, both concrete and those possible in the future (Armstrong 1996). So, we can call a sequence of socio-technical procedures – social "sale" of the idea of introducing changes in the organization – "defrosting".

2. WHO INTRODUCES CHANGES?

The place occupied in a business hierarchy defines the kind of activity of the individual members of an organization and the strength of their individual influence (Ancona et al. 1996). The top management propagates the idea of changes' necessity, simultaneously setting new strategic goals for the organization. At this moment they gain the conceptual competencies possessed by top management: the total view of internal and external organization reality and interdependence among those elements, the pro-innovation attitude and creative thinking. Also, there are important interpersonal competencies: understanding, controlling, arousing

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motivation and their own and subordinates' behaviour. For the individuals in top management the leader is a "magic leader-saviour" who is a symbol and the embodiment of promoted goals, who emanates faith in the purpose and success of announced reforms. That person represents propagated changes. Individuals at the medium level of the organization hierarchy fulfil the part of "the prophets of changes". They propagate the inevitable advancing, necessity and usefulness of those changes, simultaneously explaining the essence and expected results of the changes. It is worth stressing that they translate the long-term goals into concrete organizational practice (tactical aims). To a large degree, the success of planned undertakings depends on them (Armstrong 1996; McKenna, Beech 1997). According to the results of the research of the well-known consulting firm McKinsey & Co. (*Leaders...* 1996), an effective introduction of changes is possible only when they are approved by at least 1/3 of middle management. At that level of management the most important are in the first place the specialist competencies: knowledge, abilities directly linked to the occupation job, and then later interpersonal competencies. Top level managers are the "apostles of change". They put planned changes into effect, directly into everyday functioning of employee groups performing the basic activity of the firm (operating goals). For the success of this process they also have to share in the introduced changes. This determines the strength of their effect on their subordinates. Another equally essential factor of modification of that effect is the authority possessed by them. At this level of management interpersonal competencies are essential, the specialist ones go next.

Regardless of the place occupied by the managers within the organizational hierarchy, well-developed interpersonal skills are the most desirable, especially in conditions of change (Katz, Khan 1979; Listwan 1993). Intuition suggests what those abilities can be, and from what behaviour these abilities are formed. Should this theoretical construction be introduced, there can probably be some problems with that. It is too important an issue to ignore. Interpersonal competencies are – according to H. Gardner (Goleman 1997) – the behavioural expression of personal (social) intelligence.

This consists of:

• *INTRA*-personal intelligence – understanding own emotions and feelings determining their self-control, so it is both discontinuing the escalation of undesirable and irrelevant situational emotions, as well as arousing emotions – the most proper emotions for the arising circumstances;

• *INTER*-personal intelligence – understanding and proper responding to moods (atmosphere), motivations, and other people's behaviour. Its components are:

– abilities to carry out social analysis and creating cognition of representation of social structure,

– abilities to create personal, close social interaction,

– abilities to organize integration with jointly shared goals groups,

– abilities to negotiate solutions (reaching agreement) in situations of interests, views, subscribed values, and attitudes discrepancy.

The presented conception casts a new light on the problem of gaining followers of changes. In this case the most crucial ability is the skill to carry out social analysis and create "cognition maps". They reflect informal group structure and identify opinion-making persons that have strong influence on other group members. Moreover they describe a level of potential acceptance (rejection) of planned changes by significant persons, as well as the category of employees. It can be stated that the abilities to analyse interpersonal relations determinate controlling actions connected with becoming convinced about the usefulness of planned changes and winning followers.

1. WHO AND WHY IS AFRAID OF CHANGES?

In respect to attitudes towards organizational changes, we can divide employees into five categories (Maxwell 1994):

1. Innovators – they automatically inspire changes and are open for innovation, their number amounts to ca. 2% of the total population;

2. Ready for changes – they accept changes rather quickly, their number amounts to ca. 10% of the total population;

3. Undecided – they accept changes in some given time, they are characterized by zero-resistance, meaning total indifference; they amount to ca. 60% of the total population;

4. Reluctant for changes – they accept innovations in the long term, make passive resistance, meaning they refrain from actions contributing to the success of innovations introduced; their number amounts to ca. 20% of the total population;

5. Rejecting changes – they maintain (preserve) the existing situation, they are characterized by active resistance, meaning they make the introduction of a change difficult and even impossible; they account for ca. 8% of the total population.

The presented data discloses that ca. 12% of the total employee population are people who favour changes. The difficulties in introducing changes are expected from ca. 28% of employees. The individuals, who have not any opinions about changes, display a dislike towards changes and have doubts – make a group of ca. 60% of all employees. Such a distribution of data is clearly asymmetric, pointing to the domination of those who reject changes over those who welcome them.

Some kind of dramatizm can be added by the fact – stated during the 3-year research conducted by consultants of McKinsey – that only 10% American managers of medium level can be recognized as positively minded towards organizational innovations. We should remember here that the critical mass

of managers of this level who can guarantee success of potential changes amounts to ca. 33%.

We can present here a very interesting research concerning the acceptance of changes in Polish firms. My research in one of the firms in the heat-and-power trade, facing organizational changes at present – showed the following distribution of the support for changes among middle management.

Fear and dislike towards changes were displayed by 61% of managers, indifference by 18%, while acceptance by 21% of the researched managers. Also in this case there was an asymmetric distribution of data, with an unquestionable majority of persons rejecting the planned changes. The reasons for this dislike towards planned organizational innovation are shown in Table 1. This data shows that the rejecting attitude is determined not only by a feeling of being under a threat. In effect there appear understandable and totally natural fears connected with the threat of undermining the established social relationships and devaluing the existing professional qualifications. The dislike for the planned change is caused also by the methods of its implementation. This is already a sphere of management operations, the abilities of proper application of social engineering. Even earlier empirically stated distributions of change in support do not have to be pessimistically interpreted. According to socio-technical recommendations, it is not necessary to find the followers of specific innovations among persons who are strongly negatively minded towards the change, but among those who are indifferent towards changes (Kownacki, Rummel-Syska 1982). The number of these people in organization is the largest, as we found out.

Table 1
The reasons for rejecting changes

Rank	The reason of dislike towards changes	Amount of managers %
1	The way of introducing changes	77
2	Loss of present job in the same position	70
3 – 4	Job dismissal	65
3 – 4	Increase of management rivalry	65
5 – 6	Job tasks broaden	58
5 – 6	Responsibilities increase	58
7	Layoffs (among subordinates)	53
8	Own earnings reduction	51
9	Loss of promotion opportunities	49
10 – 11	Transfer to other employee teams	46
10 – 11	Intensity and difficulty of work increases	46
12	Conflicts increase (with subordinates)	28

N – 43 middle management
Source: own calculation.

3. HOW TO INTRODUCE CHANGES?

Socio-technical procedures "defrosting" attitudes opposing changes, creating and stimulating the need for them can be arranged in a logical sequence of operations (Baugier, Vuillod 1993). The probability of appearing strong employees' resistance towards announced innovations is then minimized, the chances of their acceptance increase. The composition of such comprehended social engineering looks as follows:

1. It is necessary to undertake propaganda operations in order to reveal the lowering of the firm's standing (also in a long time period) and rising threats to its existence before informing about planned, concretely outlined changes. It can be made by means of internal-organization media (for example: company bulletin board, noticeboard) and external-organization (local newspapers, television), and even knowingly spreading rumours and gossip. The goal is to creating and sustaining the awareness of the inevitability of some events and the necessity of change, non-alternative situation (Armstrong 1996; Kownacki, Rummel-Syska 1982; Obłój 1994);

2. Before informing a broader audience (the rest of the staff) about changes, it is necessary to convince the following individuals of the reasonableness of the planned changes:

– influential persons among managers at all management levels,

– opinion-making persons, that is: trade union leaders, informal leaders,

– persons who – at a proper management level – are to fulfil the function of change leaders.

The goal is to gain change followers, and at the same time to gain "rank-and-file" change propagators who can create "change lobby" (Kownacki, Rummel-Syska 1982; Maxwell 1994; McKenna, Beech 1997);

3. Informing employees about the planned way of coping with the ever closer and closer threat of crisis. The goal is to promote a concrete organizational solution (change), to launch the idea of change as a remedial measure (Armstrong 1996; McKenna; Beech 1997);

4. Knowingly leading to controlled crisis in some organizational units, and supporting them in overcoming that crisis and introducing improvements. In this way there can arise "tangible" incubators of change. The goal is to manage ideas of change;

5. Informing employees about the success in implementing this kind of operations on a large scale in other organizations, especially those which are known to be a social object of comparison (credit). Pointing out the examples of parallel organizations which have declined because they yielded to the temptation to sustain the *status quo* and did not carry out the required changes at

the right time (discredit). The goal is to convince of the effectiveness and the immediate necessity of change;

6. Informing employees that suggested changes are not the elements of some temporary, forced by moment operations, but elements of a long-time plan, a chosen company strategy. The goal is to promote change as an opportunity to gain the advantage over the competition, as a chance not only for the organization to survive, but also for its development (Armstrong 1996; Beech 1997);

7. Looking for the support for the changes through the employees' joining in the planning process, for example: in the form of meetings which are devoted to discussing the subject of the planned change and the ways of doing it (confrontation of opinions). Participants of these meetings should be representatives of all the levels of the organizational structure. The goal is to disclose contradictions of opinions, to increase the quality of the planned solution and to identify with the change (Baugier, Vuillod 1993; Kownacki, Rummel-Syska 1982; Maxwell 1994). It is worth noting here, that in Polish firms – in my observation – the people who promote changes do not arrange any meetings devoted to discussing the planned changes, but only provide some kind of training devoted to the need and inevitability of innovation. And even if they introduce some discussions about the projects of changes they usually do not take part in this meeting. In that way they send out messages unfavourably influencing the level of the changes' acceptance, which are to confirm "the patent for the wisdom possessed" and the perfection of suggested and already prepared project of organizational changes;

8. Informing employees – for example in the form of training – about the internal dynamics of the process of introduced changes, especially about the initial effects, i.e. about the much likely fall in functional efficiency. The goal is to increase tolerance for failures and to guide the perception of behaviour of those organization members who demonstrate resistance towards innovations (Kownacki, Rummel-Syska 1982);

9. Engaging in the process of working out the project of the change people and employee categories who can oppose innovations, or in the case of key persons negotiating mutual compromise: giving up some proposals in return for an increase of passiveness of the disclosed resistance (McKenna, Beech 1997). In the case of lack of expected effects, the fact of dismissing opponents of change will not cause any sudden emotional reaction among other staff. So, there can appear some kind of thinking that it is not just brutal execution of the possessed power, but the necessity resulting from too much discrepancy between conceptions concerning the further functioning of the organization;

10. Designing the pay system in such a way that it takes into consideration the initial and further successes concerning introducing changes. The goal is to show material benefits of changes (Armstrong 1996; Maxwell 1994; McKenna, Beech 1997);

11. Assuring the possibility for criticism of the way the change and concrete solutions were introduced carried out by those people whom innovations directly concern. The goal: to gain followers and improve the plan of change (Armstrong 1996; McKenna, Beech 1997);

12. Creating a climate supporting people who are engaged in the change of the organization, working according to new norms, rules, making some mistakes, especially at the initial stage of introducing innovations – the goal is to increase acceptance of changes (Armstrong 1996; Maxwell 1994);

13. Guaranteeing the redundant employees (in the case of the necessity of staff reduction) not only their legal rights and benefits, but also taking up such operations which demonstrate the care about "outdated human resources" (i.e. personnel leasing, outplacement). For every individual, even the one who accepts and adapts to the currently introduced changes, is a potentially removable employee. The goal is to build up employees' morale and increase support of changes.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Although the operations presented here, included in social engineering, concern the manipulation of people, they do not have to absolutely mean their primitive and brutal abusing.

Operations undertaken in order to help the survival and to give an opportunity of organization development, assure at the same time satisfying individual needs by its members. In the situation when an organization needs changes, the hero is not the person who pretends that everything is all right and is afraid of sudden decisions and organizational undertakings. Such a person only delays the inescapable (later more difficult and significant in effects) operations. The source of changes, temporarily often unpopular, besides socio-technical abilities, has to have a belief in the propagated values and intentions. There must be a moral conviction as to the legitimacy of the propagated changes. Only then does the likelihood increase, when the undertaken operations are both effective and socially approved.

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