

THE ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
AGENCY
CLINIC

The organizational
development essence:
Change

José Luis Sandoval

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ESSENCE:

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Abstract:

Debido al vertiginoso avance de las transformaciones que está presenciando el mundo moderno, el concepto de Desarrollo Organizacional nuevamente toma fuerza como el eje integrador de los sistemas de administración. El cambio es la esencia del Desarrollo Organizacional y como tal es necesario explorar sus elementos constitutivos, su relación con la cultura y algunas aproximaciones que faciliten su entendimiento y su manejo. De esa forma, el Desarrollo Organizacional ayuda a definir acciones en el campo de la gestión y abre nuevos espacios de investigación.

Due to the vertiginous transformations in the modern world, the Organizational Development concept emerge anew as the integrating axis of the management systems. The change is the Organizational Development essence, and in that way it is necessary to explore its constituent elements, its relation with the culture and some approaches that facilitate its understanding and its handling. In that way, the Organizational Development helps to define actions in the management field and opens new spaces for research.

Keywords:

Desarrollo Organizacional, cambio, gestión, administración, cultura organizacional.

Organizational Development, change, management, administration, organizational culture.

The organizational development essence: Change

Introduction

Change and Organizational Development (OD) are the same. More accurately, OD is one way to achieve consistent organizational changes.

The OD practice, the exercise of planned change, is very complex and it embraces many elements: leadership, motivation, organizational culture, structure, power, relationships, processes and others. All of these elements interact with one another to achieve changes, and OD offers a systemic approach to articulate them consistently.

OD is really interesting as techniques about how to manage organizations, but it is more interesting as a holistic concept to face the new trends of competition, effectiveness and overall, survival in the businesses. OD is the key to prepare organizations for the future.

“The only constant is change” is a very common expression used by executives and organizations through the world, but many attempts to change fail because they do not generate the expected results (Senge, 2000, p. 5). OD has its essence in planned change and this concept should be understood enough in order to generate real transformations. The problem may be that many people think that they understand the nature of change and they act in consequence; but very often this is a big mistake.

Success in change needs a different way of thinking, and it starts by understanding more the magic word: change.

What is change?

It is possible to define change in many ways such as “the alteration of the status quo” (Hodge, Anthony and Gales, 1996, p. 338) or “making things different” (Robbins, 1993, p. 668) or simply the movement from one point or action system to another. The essence is that after change, things will be different.

Commonly change is not instantaneous, but a continuous process. It implies that organizations must maintain permanent support in order to achieve better results.

How to understand change today? It is necessary to change?

Charles Handy (1993, p. 74) wrote that

“As a minimum one thing is clear in organizations – publics and privates -; they are facing a world much more aggressive, where they will be judged harder than before on the basis of their effectiveness and where there are less protective barriers behind that they can protect themselves.”

This is true. Today organizations are facing the most incredible turbulence in their environment and forces that they never imagined before pressure them. The future is really different from the past and organizations will face multiple challenges. It is possible that companies had done everything in business in the past, but it is not enough for the future.

The world and its organizations are at the end of the “first curve” and in the beginning of the “second curve” (Morrison, 1996, p. 14).

The new panorama is really different as Morrison (1996, p. 14) wrote:

| <i>First curve</i> | <i>To</i> | <i>Second Curve</i> |
|--|----------------|--------------------------|
| | Market | |
| Capital | To | Knowledge |
| Producer | To | Consumer |
| Atlantic | To | Pacific |
| Japan | To | China |
| International Trade | To | Electronic Commerce |
| Computers | To | Internet |
| Money | To | People |
| | Organization | |
| Mechanistic | To | Organic |
| Engineering | To | Ecology |
| Corporations | To | Individuals and networks |
| Horizontal and Vertical Integration | To | Virtual Integration |
| Business Processes | To | Culture |
| | The individual | |
| Hard work | To | Hypereffectiveness |
| Security | To | Uncertainty |
| Current Career | To | Future Career |
| Faith | To | Hope |
| Loyalty | To | Courage |

Imagination? Not.... Its is a reality. In fact, managers must develop new abilities and learn new things in order to survive by themselves and to help their organizations in the same way (C.K.Prahalad, 1997).

Reasons for change

Of course there are many reasons for change, but it is possible to define two different kinds of mobiles: external causes and internal causes.

As external causes for change exist: new markets trends, new consumers with new needs, technology innovations, new

competition, the evolutions of society with new life-styles and new ways of thinking, and many new elements that demand a new driven style for companies.

Internal causes can be the development of the organizations by itself, new managers' visions, a new strategy or new circumstances like fusions or alliances.

It is necessary to understand why one company wants to change, because it is the first step to achieve better results (Grouard and Meston, 1996, p. 15)

At the end, new circumstances demand new ways to manage companies. Organizations are forced to change, and it will be better if they transform themselves on their own. The panorama it is not familiar, because organizations find these continua of transformation (Hodge, Anthony and Gales, 1996, p. 359)

| | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Stability</i> | <i>is changing to</i> | <i>Rapid change</i> |
| <i>Predictability</i> | <i>is changing to</i> | <i>Unpredictability</i> |
| <i>Staleness</i> | <i>is changing to</i> | <i>Innovation</i> |
| <i>Familiarity</i> | <i>is changing to</i> | <i>Unfamiliarity</i> |
| <i>Boredom</i> | <i>is changing to</i> | <i>Enervation</i> |
| <i>Certainty</i> | <i>is changing to</i> | <i>Uncertainty</i> |
| <i>Atrophy</i> | <i>is changing to</i> | <i>New strength</i> |

But,..... all executives listen to the sounds of change? Unfortunately, not. As Barker (1995, p. 229) says, soon many people will say new things and they will create new realities, but many managers will be incapable of listening and to seeing that. Only the managers who understand and act in consequence will achieve success.

Levels and velocity of change

There are two levels of change: superficial and "in depth" (Grouard and Meston, 1996, p. 15-17).

The term "superficial" may sound trivial. But it is not right because it signifies little continuous changes that embrace strategies, structure, processes, some physical transformations and others, and they have as characteristic that generally they are easy to decide, quick to develop and at limited costs. An example of these characteristics is Kaizen.

Many "superficial" changes may exist and it is possible that they cause "in depth" changes because they affect crucial areas in the organization. This is a common effect. In fact, one of the most important elements to take into account is that, in the way of change, it is necessary to generate little victories for maintaining the enthusiasm while the organization achieves bigger results. (Kotter, 1997, p. 129-143).

On the other hand, deep changes have a great impact on the organizations, affect their culture, possibly their practices, their vision, their strategies, their structure or other elements with great impact. Their characteristic is that generally they are very expensive, they demand a lot of time and they generate effects in many areas within organizations, and their consequences last through times.

"In depth" changes are risky and they should be done very carefully because of their effects.

Commonly "in depth" changes are associated with radical changes and superficial changes are associated with little and continuous changes.

And, what about the velocity of change?

It is difficult to define the speed of change because it depends on many circumstances: desired change levels, organizational culture, managers' commitment, number of people included and others. Nevertheless, some changes need to be slow because they demand of organizational adjustments and other must be fast because of environmental demands and pressures, for example.

One of the most difficult task for managers is to learn how and when to accelerate or delay the change.

How to generate changes: consensus vs. imposition

In general, it is recognized that there are two basic ways to generate changes: by consensus and by imposition.

The first, consensus, is the ideal way because it takes each person's opinions into account, discusses every idea and when people adopt the processed change, it will be easier to accept.

Consensus demands a clear management commitment, a continuous work and great will power to maintain purpose. Consensus is the better way to achieve better results when organizations make changes, but it is no easy.

Another way is by imposition. Imposition reflects the image of hierarchy, the change process pushed by a few people but with power, and/or the obligation of making changes in spite of others opinion or people's wishes.

Imposition is not the best way to achieve results, but many times is the only way.

In order to define what kind of strategy is possible to use to generate changes, it is a good idea to review different attitudes that organizations find when attempting to generate changes:

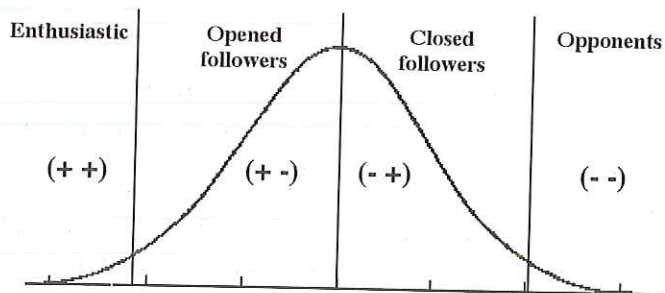


Fig.1 Attitudes in face of changes

In the first area, are the "enthusiastic" people with an excellent attitude (+ +) for change. These people not only

believe in the idea of change but, in addition, they help to convince other people in the same way.

In the second area are the "opened followers". These people have a semi-opened attitude (+ -) because they understand and accept the proposed changes, but they have many excuses to delay the process. This is the most common group of people and they may generate disillusion and the loss of the initial impulse for change.

The next area is the place of "closed followers". These people have a semi-closed attitude (- +) and they do not understand neither believe nor accept the proposed changes, but if the organization demands it, they do it. They prefer to continue with their present process or practices but if it is an obligation they say, "if it is up, it is up".

The final area is the kingdom of the "opponents". They have a closed attitude (- -) and they neither believe nor understand nor accept the proposed changes, and they will make an effort to stop it. These people are negative and they can destroy the attempt to change.

When reviewing the previous elements it is easy to understand the hard work needed to achieve changes, but the following figure gives managers some idea about how to manage them by taking into account different attitudes:

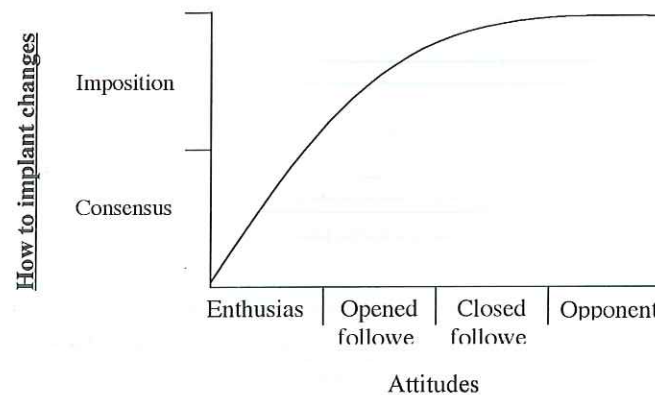


Fig.2 Management styles to implant changes

With “+ +” people is possible to achieve changes by consensus and may be with a little pressure with the “+ -” people. On the opposite, with “- +” people the managers will need more imposition than before, and with “- -” people may be the only way is by hard imposition.

At the end, managers need to understand what kind of attitude their people have in order to define their strategy to achieve changes.

The basic change principles

It is difficult to determine what kinds of characteristics are common for all changes due to their complexity.

Nevertheless, by reviewing some authors (Quinn, 1997; Grouard and Meston, 1996; Handy, 1993; Brill, 1997; Deming, 1989) five principles come up always, in one way or another in many successful change processes:

- Holistic principle
- Breaking principle
- Constancy principle
- Non-preference principle
- Indetermination principle

Holistic principle means that change demands to act over all components that the organization has and which can influence the change process.

These components may include those that define its action (strategies, structure, facilities, services, products, and others) and those that represent its philosophy (values, organizational culture, motivation). The change process must embrace all of them because from this synergy depends the success.

Breaking principle is clear and means that change demands to throw off balance present paradigms and to maintain this unbalance through the process.

This principle is founded on the definition of change as a movement from one point to another, one action way to

another or one system to another. Some authors define their idea of change with this principle (Lewin, 1951; Kotter, 1997) and develop strategies from this point.

The constancy principle is fundamental. Many processes fail because the organization is not constant with its efforts to maintain the impulse (Senge, 2000, p. 5-9). The only way to achieve results is by supporting the idea of change, by providing resources for it, and over all, by maintaining the spirit, the energy, and the disposition for change.

In addition, if an organization starts the change process without constancy, the process may fail and its people may acquire a skeptic attitude that will affect future attempts.

Furthermore, some authors encourage consistent changes (Deming, 1989; Lucas, 1997; Kotter, 1997; Dione, 1994) and they denote that it is one of the most difficult task for managers: maintaining the constancy.

The non-preference principle is linked with the concept of universality of the change process (Grouard and Meston, 1996) because success depends on what an organization implies within their implementation all people will be affected by the process. If a company intends to begin changes without taking into account all the people that will be affected by it, the process may fail.

The indetermination principle says that change can be directed but never totally dominated (Grouard and Meston, 1996). Many times change is a complex process and it has many unpredictable elements. The organization and their leaders of change should manage the different variables, but it is really impossible to dominate all of them. Instead of that, organizations must define its goals and leaders must control the direction and the power of the process.

May exist more basic change principles, but the five before are enough to understand the change process.

Fields and levers of change

In general, organizations should understand how and where to try changes, because the strategy to follow and the expected effects depend on that.

This point is really important because depending on where changes are applied, they need different manage and they cause different effects.

It is possible to find many fields for change, and it depends on organizational decisions. There are several possible classifications. For example, Peters and Waterman (1984) described their seven "s": structure, strategy, systems, skills, staff, style and shared values. Leavitt (1978), in turn, wrote about six elements: task, structure, staff, information, control and environment. Grouard and Meston (1996) denotes that there are five basic elements: strategy, structure, systems, organizational culture, and the management way.

The last approach is interesting because all authors denote the importance of managing change effectively, but it is not common that the managerial style will be considered like a field for change.

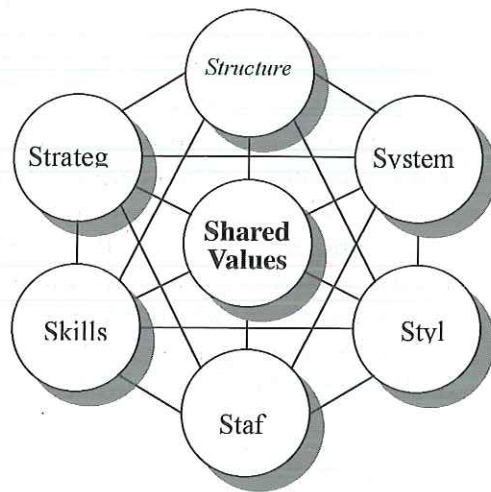


Fig.3 Peters and Waterman's seven S's model

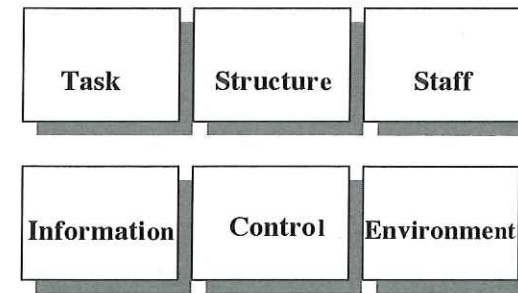


Fig.4 Leavitt's organizational areas for change

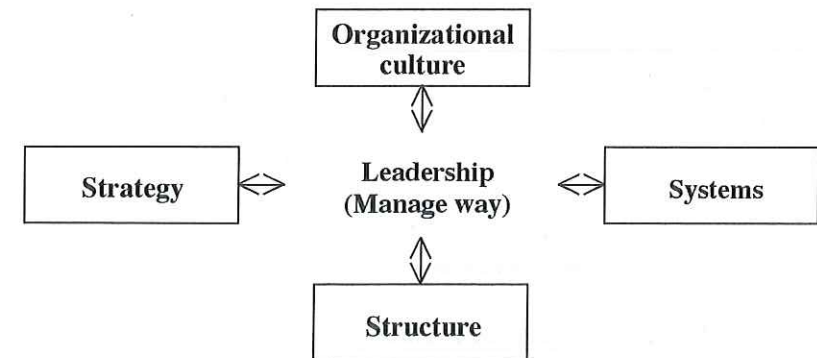


Fig. 5 Grouard and Meston's fields to develop changes

Independently of what kind of classification the organization uses for planning changes, four powerful levers for achieving organizational changes emerge (Brill and Worth, 1997): human nature, power, social processes, and the essence, leadership.

Organizations should use each lever for planned structured changes and, if they utilize them with all their specific capability, it will be more feasible to cause transformation.

It is not easy to define what is the most important lever, but leadership emerges as a vital essence to mobilize the organizational spirit. Because before, the development and practice of leadership is a crucial managers' task.

The change process

The knowledge about how change occurs is the cornerstone of a lot of research in the business field, organizational behavior, psychology, religion, philosophy and other disciplines. The mystery of the change process has been studied a lot, but today some of its elements remaining unknown.

Of course, not all changes start at the same time or the same way, and there are two possibilities: planned changes or unplanned changes.

Planned changes try to define what kind of transformation the organization wants by using a structured way, step by step. This is the OD field. In fact, some authors say that "OD represents, then a process and a technique that allow organizations shape its culture, determine where and when changes are useful, do them and evaluate their results" (Marguiles, 1972).

Unplanned change is change developed unexpectedly and at the same time that things occur. It is really dangerous because of its potential effects, but unfortunately this kind of change is common.

The perfect idea in this field would be that all changes were planned. OD offers tools to do it well and encourages managers to use them. But, it is necessary to understand that, due to the complexity inherent with the change concept, it is really difficult to have 100% of the information before trying changes, and 100% of certainty of success. In brief, change always has some unpredictability but managers should try them.

Starting from this point, it is possible to explore the change process.

There are many approaches to explain the change process, but one of the most popular is the definition offered by Kurt Lewin (1951) with his model: unfreezing, movement, refreezing.

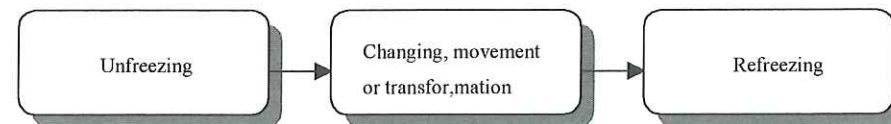


Fig. 6 Process of Change - Kurt Lewin's model

This model is very clear and it allows the definition of strategies and plans for achieving the desired results.

Unfreezing

Unfreezing occurs when people and/or the organization convince themselves of the need for change and then, they decide to start a process of transformation. This stage is the hardest of all because it implies that the initial resistance to change is dominated.

By following the scheme posed by Grouard and Meston (1996, p. 72) it is possible to divide unfreezing into three sub-stages: 1) breaking, 2) anxiety and 3) security.

Breaking appears when people are aware that present circumstances are changing and that new sceneries demand new actions. It is necessary not only to understand that sufficiently but in depth.

Anxiety is a feeling that appears when people understand that their old and present way of action or attitudes need to be changed in order to achieve new results.

Anxiety is a feeling of instability about old practices and the urgency to find other new practices. It is a very emotional stage.

Security appears when people perceive answers to their anxiety, ways for facing the pressures or possible solutions for their worries.

How to initiate the unfreezing stage with success?

John Kotter (1997, p. 37-53) says that the first action is by generating the sense of urgency, based on the organizational vision. Kotter is right and managers should develop this task by using communications, persuasion, formal and informal meetings, and if necessary, manipulation or implicit and explicit menace. Obviously the last are the less recommended because they do not assure the maintenance of commitment for a long time, but it would be the only way in many cases.

Changing or movement

The goal of transformation or movement is to guide the organization toward the desired state.

This stage demands a lot of work from managers because people demand new information, new behavioral models, a strong vision, new beliefs to adopt, and over all, a clear managers' example about new ways of thinking.

This is a learning stage (Kreitner and Kinicki, 1995, p. 566) and it defines the possibility of a successful transformation. The concept of reengineering managed thinking about people not only in the process is useful at this point (Guizar, 1998, p. 30).

Refreezing

Refreezing is the institutionalizing of changes in so that all people understand and follow them.

This stage is really important because the changes need to be stabilized and people need to adopt new behaviors as their own. In this stage people integrate

the new way of thinking and action into their own personality, values and attitudes.

Sometimes managers forget the importance of this final stage and they assume that when people know and understand new things they will adopt them automatically. This is a big mistake and the transformation may fail because of that. Changes need to be anchored in order to achieve consistent new behaviors.

There are many other interesting models for change that attempt the same: a consistent organizational transformation. Three examples are the Lippitt, Watson and Westley's model (1958), the Kilmann's total system change (1989) and the Kreitner and Kinicki's system model of change (1995).

The first includes an specific mention about the role of external change agents or consultants into the process, and determines seven stages:

- 1) The development of a need for change. This is the same first stage of the Lewin's model.
- 2) The establishment of a relationship for change between the change agent and the organization.
- 3) The diagnostic of problems and specific goals of transformation.
- 4) Planning. The definition of the route to try the transformation.
- 5) Action. Implementing the new processes. The 3, 4 and 5 stages are the same as the second stage (changing) of the Lewin's model.
- 6) The stabilization and evaluation. Is the same "refreezing" stage of the Lewin's model.
- 7) Ending. The end of the process of transformation.

It is not easy to implement this model exactly in the same sequence, but it provides a direction to achieve good results in search of transformation.

A broader model of change is Ralph Kilmann's model (1989) because it specifies the key points to manage for achieving consistent changes. This model presents five stages: 1) starts the program, 2) diagnostic the problems, 3)

planning “trajectories”, 4) implant “trajectories”, and 5) evaluate results.

In this model the focus are the “trajectories” defined by Kilmann (1989) as critical advantages key points: 1) culture, 2) managerial skills, 3) teams building, 4) strategy-structure, and 5) reward systems. The careful intervention into these five “trajectories” will assure better results in the way of transformation.

Another interesting approach is the Systems Model of Change by Kreitner and Kinicki (1995) that takes a general perspective of organizational change by defining the process in a systemic way where all elements can influence the one other. This model looks complex but is really easy to understand and embrace many elements present implicit or explicitly in other models.

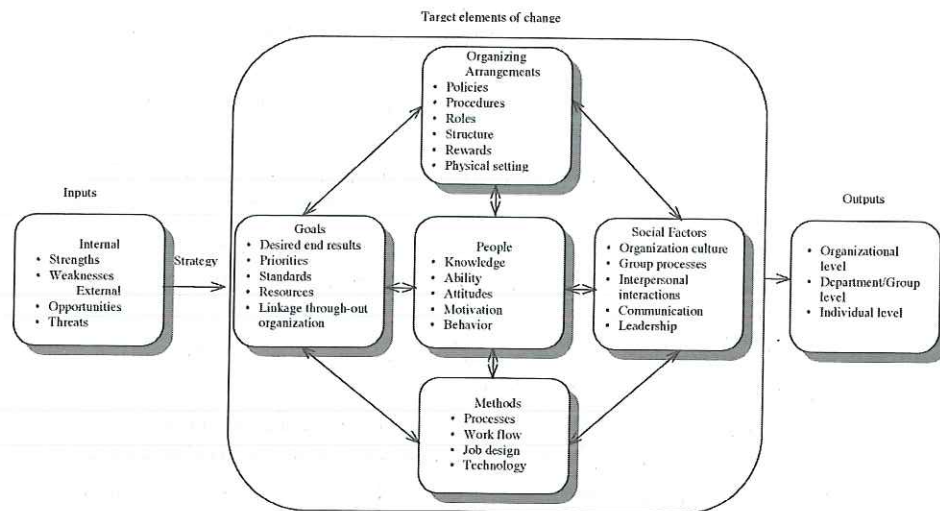


Fig.7 Systems Model of Change (Kreitner and Kinicki, 1995)

Following its systemic structure, the three main components are: inputs, target elements of change, and outputs.

Kreitner and Kinicki (1995) based their model in other authors' works (Fuqua and Kurpui, 1993; Nadler and Tushman, 1989) and it is possible to conclude that this is the framework to implement other change models.

In this model there are many interesting elements but it is important to point out that change should be consistent with strategic planning that takes into account internal and external factors, it considers many elements that can be changed, and generates inputs at three levels: organization, groups and individuals.

By reviewing this model it is possible to understand that change efforts demand strong commitment and clear goals from managers in order to achieve results that generate competitiveness.

Independently of what model the organization decides to use to produce changes, it is important to understand that changes do not occur as spontaneous generation or due to good will or good intentions, only. Changes demand intentional actions and they depend on what idea the organization has about the best way to generate transformation

There are two different approaches to generate changes: (Beer, Russell and Spector, 1990):

- From attitude to task
- From task to attitudes

According to the first approach, transformation starts with an evolution of competences, skills, attitudes and behaviors of the people within the organization (Grrourad and Meston, 1996):

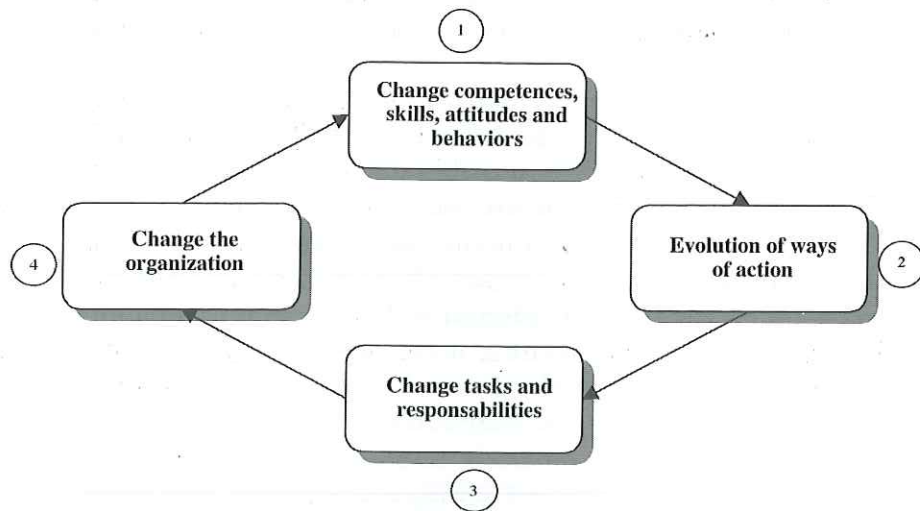


Fig.8 First approach to generate changes: behavioral focus

This approach is slower than the second because it depends on people's will and this is the field of resistance of change.

In any case, the intention to change attitudes and behaviors is the essence for incremental and consistent changes. But, of course that is not an easy task.

The main question is, how can organizations generate a consistent evolution of attitudes and behaviors?

Many consultants think that it is enough with seminars, courses, meetings and direct contact with the people, but unfortunately it is not sufficient.

The first step to change attitudes is to define or redefine the mission, vision and value statements, the roles of managers, the individual and organizational goals and policies about the importance of human factors for the organizations.

Once previous actions have been done, the organization can continue with the processes with traditional actions like seminars, courses and others.

The second approach determines that attitudes and behaviors are strongly influenced by functions, responsibilities and tasks that are assigned to people.

The model is:

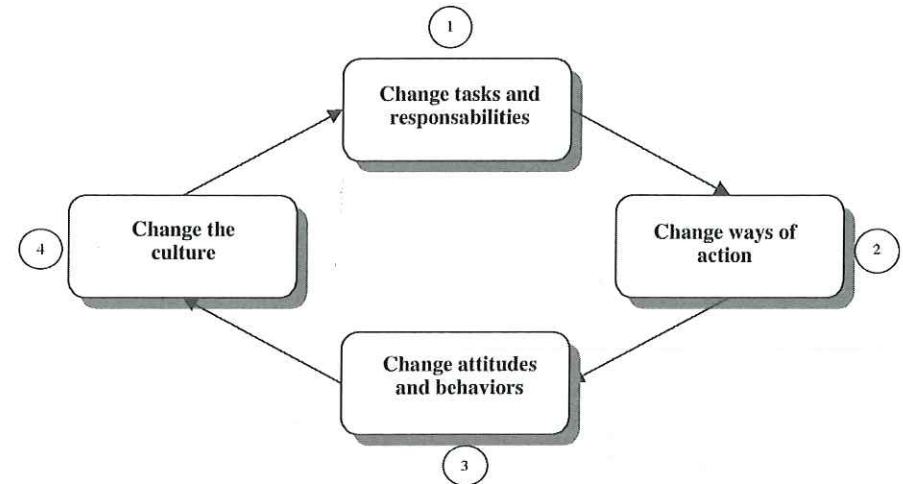


Fig.9 Second to generate changes: tasks focus

This is a behaviorist idea and it supposes that when people execute repeatedly specific tasks, they will adopt them as a custom and these deeds generate new attitudes.

This approach has a good basis because it basis its ideas on the power of rules, procedures, control and defined structure, but it forgets the basis of any development: the people.

Some theories are founded on this concept and they generate deep impacts on modern organizations.

The recent success (and failure) of reengineering demonstrates that this theory is followed by many managers around the world.

The confusion is that if an organization develops its transformation only based on new tasks and responsibilities, control them by a strict supervision, it is possible that they achieve good results in a short time.

But, if it forgets the people, its development could be ephemeral and non-sustainable on long term.

By analyzing both the first and the second models, another approach emerges more focused on achieving results by taking into account both people and tasks in parallel:

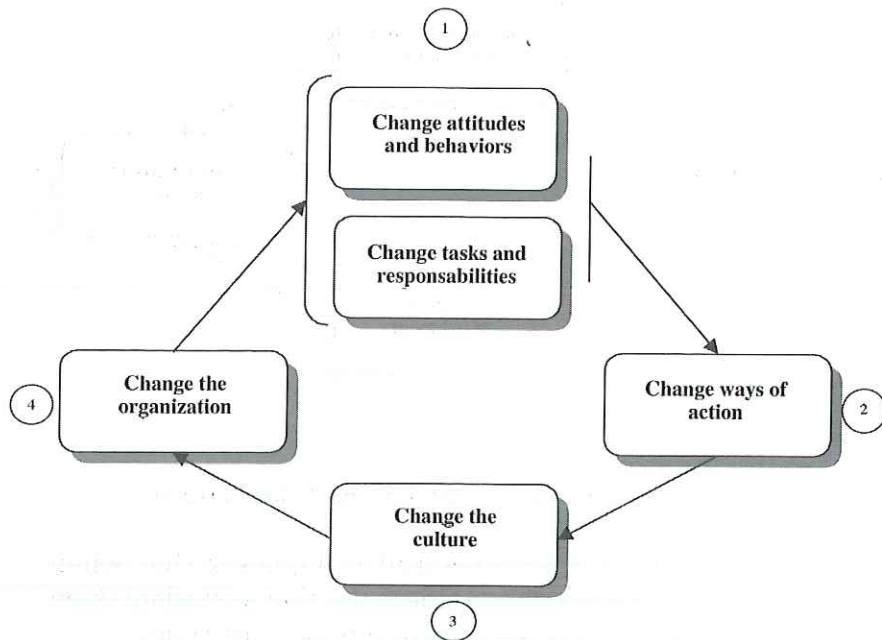


Fig.10 Third approach to generate changes: Behavioral and tasks focus

This approximation recognizes that it is important to search new action ways as consequence of changes in attitudes and behaviors but at the same time as consequence of new tasks and responsibilities or, in other words, redesign processes. This model is logical and it demands that managers should work simultaneously with either individual and groups sensitizing, and the analysis and redefinition of processes.

By reviewing the concept offered by Kenichi Omahe (1989) about organizational culture, the model of change with attitudes and tasks in parallel fits clearly with the two levels of culture: visible and non visible.

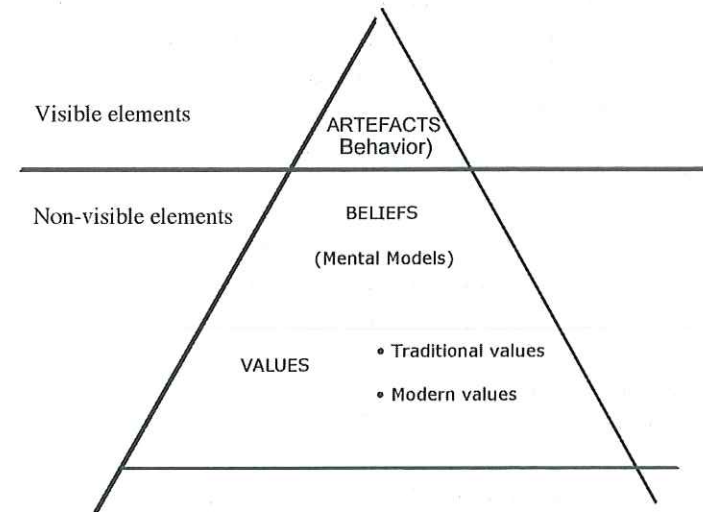


Fig.11 Organizational Culture - elements

By following Omahe, organizational culture has two different elements: 1) visible or those that identify external behaviors or actions (named by Omahe as artefacts), and 2) non-visible or those mental models and values that cause specific actions and behaviors.

Visible elements are equivalent to tasks and responsibilities and non-visible elements are similar to attitudes in the third approach for generate changes explained before.

In brief, the approach that sustains the idea of using simultaneously the definition of new assignments and sensitizing people in order to develop new attitudes and behaviors are consistent and it provides a good way for achieving better results in search of consistent changes.

Conclusions

How McShane (1992, p. 565) says, change, no matter how interesting, well thought, or well intentioned will be resisted by organizations and most of their members.

The resistance may be overt, subtle, immediate, deferred, implicit or explicit, passive or aggressive. No matter what way uses resistance, the managers' task is to find how to manage it effectively.

The resistance to change is not an expression of evil acts or the desire to damage the organization; it is a common answer from people in face of new changes, and many authors have designed interesting taxonomies in order to understand it (Robbins, 1993, p. 672).

This theme and others in the same direction are the challenges in the OD field and managers have here their main assignment for the future.

In spite of some authors who say that OD had thrived in 70's and 80's decades (Hernandez, 1996, p. 255) and that it has some controversial ideas (Chiavenato, 1995, p. 651), others think on the opposite and they are of the opinion that OD is the best way for achieving competitiveness (Koontz and Weirich, 1994, p. 439; Guízar, 1998, p. 4-12; French, 1996, p. 2-24).

Nobody discusses that the tendency is to consider people as the main goal for organizations, and change is the framework. OD is a way of thinking and action that helps companies for managing that.

Of course that OD should revitalize itself permanently and should incorporate new advances and tendencies in the human behavior sciences. For example, new fields to develop that are new questions for OD practitioners are knowledge management, knowledge capital, learning organizations, OD and different transcultural processes, the influence of a new cybernetic word in the speed of change, the changing role of leadership, situational and transformational leadership, the new relationships into virtual organizations, and much

more. Future is uncertain but organizations that use consistently OD concepts will have advantages through analytical and practical tools for facing it.

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