

1 Conference theme: Managing for peak performance

Competitive Session

Do you have the right 'shock absorbers'?
The role of adaptive change agents in facilitating successful change.

Dr Hafsa Ahmed

Strategic Policy, Environment Canterbury, Canterbury, New Zealand

Email: Hafsa.Ahmed@ecan.govt.nz

Associate Professor David A. Cohen

Department of Agribusiness and Markets, Lincoln University, Canterbury, New Zealand

Do you have the right 'shock absorbers'?
The role of adaptive change agents in facilitating successful change.

ABSTRACT:

Change is an ongoing process in organisations as they continue to meet environmental demands to improve organisational performance and enhance competitiveness. However, researchers have highlighted that only one-third of change initiatives are successful. Breakdowns caused due to resistance to change are often cited as a main reason for failure. As research examining how resistance can be a positive influencer for change emerges, the paper contributes to this theme. Our research uses the metaphor of 'shock absorber' for change agents and argues that in order to achieve successful organisational change, an effective shock absorber is likely to shift through strategies of action, reflection and adaptation. The best strategy can be determined by identifying who and what really counts.

Keywords: strategic change, managing in changing and complex business environments, dynamic capabilities, organisational learning, managing for peak performance

ADAPT OR DIE

Rapid adjustment to external environmental pressures is essential for organisations in their efforts to achieve better performance. It is also directly linked to their struggle for legitimacy (Pitsakis, Biniari, & Kuin, 2012). These pressures often manifest themselves in ways that demand organisational change. Such change can encompass realignment of strategy, followed by changes to an organisation to initiate/implement the content of this new strategy (Hofer & Schendel, 1978). Various studies have focussed on answering questions about how change was initiated and how it could be managed (Van de Ven & Sun, 2011). The literature has documented varying perspectives and empirical approaches in researchers' attempts to understand organisational change (Lewin, Weigelt & Emery, 2004). The overall objective of organisational change remains improved performance in order to enhance competitiveness (Balogun & Hope Hailey, 2008) and to maintain legitimacy. However, some of these studies reveal that leaders consider only about a third of organisational change efforts to be successful (Beer & Nohria, 2000; Meaney & Pung, 2008). Such estimates reveal that effective organisational

change is not as common as one might think (By, 2005; Meaney & Pung, 2008; Pieterse, Caniels, & Homan, 2012). Often these failure rates are attributed to a single source – resistance to change from within the organisation (Ford, Ford, & D’Amelio, 2008; Pieterse et al. 2012). As Van de Ven and Sun (2011) point out change participants often resist following proposed change plans which leads to breakdowns. In effect, the change process does not often unfold in the expected ways and is different to the conceptual model that served as the basis for change (Burke, 2009). However, different views about resistance to change are emerging. Downs and Carlon (2012: 780) write that often ‘resistance is portrayed as the enemy to change’, and we should instead treat resistance as ‘an essential element of organisational change rather than something to be squashed’. The complexity associated with organisational change processes is intertwined with resistance to change, which can be seen as a mix of contexts and attitudes (Downs & Carlon, 2012; Macri, Tagliaventi, & Bertolotti, 2002).

Research investigating resistance to change continues to grow (see Ford et al. 2008; Ford & Ford, 2010) and the present paper contributes to this stream, focussing on change agents. The significant role of the change agent in facilitating organisational adaptation requires a detailed analysis of how they navigate the complex terrain of organisational change. We utilise the metaphor of a ‘shock absorber’ to describe the change agent and draw attention to the effects a shock absorber’s response has on reducing breakdowns in the adaptation process. Pettigrew et al. 2001 (701) point to a ‘pattern of change initiatives which contribute to organisational performance’ and through a review of the literature we suggest that these initiatives can be strategy-driven. We argue that in order to achieve successful organisational change, an effective shock absorber is likely to shift through strategies of action, reflection and adaptation. Although action and reflection have previously been discussed in the literature (see Van de Ven & Sun, 2011), we regard adaptation, responses which result from feedback, as essential for success of organisational change initiatives.

This paper contributes to the growing organisational change literature on reducing breakdowns by focussing on how utilising resistance to change can be a means for achieving successful organisational change. An important contribution of this paper lies in its representation of the different strategies a change agent can utilise. We begin by offering a brief overview of the organisational change literature, followed by a discussion of breakdowns as a response to change. We then present arguments from the

literature about the significant role of change agents in organisational adaptation, and the different strategies they utilise to deal with breakdown – action and reflection. We follow this discussion with recognition of the need for incorporating the breakdown concept into the adaptation process as an essential component, and present arguments to support this contention. As this paper is a conceptual paper we conclude by indicating a future research agenda.

ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE AND BREAKDOWNS

It is undeniable that change plays a significant part in organisations. Revision of strategies, structures and modification of cultural norms is necessary in order to maintain alignment with changing environments (Duncan, Mouly & Nilakant, 2001). Poole and Van de Ven (2004) argued that change is a major organisational phenomenon, at the heart of organisational success. Over the past six decades, theorists have tried to explain organisational change, focussed on understanding how to improve organisational effectiveness (Greenberg, 1995). However, it is recognised that change is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon, where every attempt to explain it is limited (Poole & Van de Ven, 2004). The literature has continued to grow, offering deeper and more detailed explanations of the dynamics associated with organisational change. A summary of these is presented in Table 1 below.

Insert Table 1 about here

Research has also improved our understanding of the inherent demands presented by organisational change (Battilana & Casciaro, 2012). One of the key challenges contributing to low success rate of organisational change initiatives is breakdowns. Burke (2009) and Van de Ven and Sun (2011) suggest breakdowns are discrepancies between our conceptual model of the change process and what we observe unfolding. Van de Ven and Sun's (2011) review summarises the literature on breakdowns experienced during organisational change and remedies utilised to deal with them. Often, resistance to change is a recurring theme in examination of breakdowns in organisational change processes (Cummings & Worley, 2005; Pieterse et al. 2012; Senior & Swailes, 2010; Van de Ven & Sun, 2011). Thus, our exploration of the literature on resistance to change began with two questions – (1) why

does resistance occur, and (2) how can resistance be utilised to benefit the organisational change process?

Resistance to change as a cause of breakdown

One of the key reasons for resistance is a disconnect between ‘planners’, those who design a change programme, and ‘doers’, those who do not participate in development but rather, implement it (Ford et al. 2008; Van de Ven & Sun, 2011). Change processes can also breakdown because participants do not recognize the need for change, engendering resistance. Resistance often results from a failure to reach agreement on goals or actions (Burke, Lake & Paine, 2009; Nutt & Wilson, 2010; Van de Ven & Sun, 2011). Our examination of the resistance to change literature revealed different themes. These can be broadly categorised into three groups:

Power

The change literature links resistance to change with unequal power relations (Pietersen et al. 2012). However, management theorists utilise euphemistic terms, evoking concepts such as leadership or governance to avoid direct references to power (Kärreman & Alvesson, 2009). Hence, Kärreman (2010: 1411) reiterates Pfeffer’s (1992) point that the ‘social realities of power in organisations are poorly understood’. One of the perspectives utilised by Kärreman and Alvesson (2009) describes power as a restraining force, where actors make people do things which they would not have done otherwise. In this context, resistance becomes an unconcealed reaction to the overt use of power (Pietersen et al. 2012).

Identity

Identity theory assists in understanding how individuals deal with multiple, competing expectations and demands in order to inform their view of self and define their behaviour (Pitsakis et al. 2012). The pressure from external forces creates identity discrepancies for individuals, as they are dealing with conflicting demands. These originate from both within the organisation and without (Kraatz & Block, 2008; Pitsakis et al. 2012; Pratt & Kraatz, 2009). Individuals will chose to back and adopt activities that are congruent with relevant aspects of their identities (Pitsakis et al. 2012; Stryker & Serpe, 1982). Previous research has called attention to identity-based resistance as an obstacle to change (Brown, 2006; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). As Mahadevan (2012) has pointed out, this resistance originates

from individuals being unable to link the past collective self to present conditions; hence, this could represent a static difference between identity and change, enhancing resistance.

Setting

A recent study by Binci et al. (2012) utilised the phrase 'climate for change', an idea borrowed from and related to Klein and Sorra's (1996) 'climate for implementation'. This was argued as an important precursor for change. The climate encompasses three critical elements - trust, involvement and perceived benefits. Collins and Smith (2006) have emphasised that lack of trust among employees will make them cautious towards information sharing; hence impacting performance of projects. However, trust is enabled via the active involvement of members and an understanding the perceived benefits of the change initiate. As Ford et al. (2008) have suggested, trust is a critical factor in any change process as it allows greater involvement. The lack of it therefore leads to more resistance to change.

Resistance to change as a positive influencer

Ford et al. (2008: 362) offer a powerful observation, stating that 'resistance is an interpretation assigned by change agents to the behaviours and communications of change recipients.' Over the years, the change literature has portrayed resistance in a negative manner. However, literature offering an alternative approach to the negative view of resistance is growing. Binci et al. (2012: 879) write, resistance to change is not an '*a priori* ...negative signal' and we are now seeing literature which explains the changing nature of this sort of resistance. Many studies have examined how resistance can be used a source of positive influence in change initiatives. We briefly reflect on a pair of studies with this focus to offer some insight (see Downs & Carlon (2012) for more studies on this theme).

In their study, Pietersen et al. (2012) utilise the idea of power as a constructive force, where resistance is an integral element of power play. Relying on discourse analysis, they link the change management literature with the linguistic literature. Their research specified how professional discourse can alter resistance and hence, generate cooperation in change situations. In an effort to find out how identity-based resistance can be used as a positive influencer towards change. Mahadevan (2012) utilised emergent and retrospective narratives of self in an organisation where the English language had negative associations in the German context. By uncovering reasons for resistance through these

narratives, a strategy of integration is developed which helped employees, both German and non-German, into forming relationships of active beneficiaries as against passive recipients of integration. As research reconstructing resistance to change grows, we are beginning to obtain accounts of how resistance can be used as a resource for successful change management by change agents (Ford et al. 2008). In the next section we explore the role of change agents through the lens of resistance to change.

MANAGING BREAKDOWNS – THE ROLE OF SHOCK ABSORBERS

Organisational change initiatives are rarely static, unfolding over a period of time (Isabella, 1990). Hence, critical to the success of an organisational change initiative is the role of change agents who need to continually adjust their actions over the course of the change. By change agents we are referring to managers or consultants who direct or manage change in organisations (Van de Ven & Sun, 2011), where they might also be called ‘change facilitators’. As Walker, Armenakis and Bernerth (2007) suggest, change agents need to be conscious of several factors specific to the changing organisation when implementing organisational change. A substantial number of studies in the literature focus on resistance encountered by change agents when implementing organisational change; however, this is a one sided view in favour of change agents (Ford et al. 2008). Ford and colleagues’ (2008) argument that change agents are equally responsible for the creation of resistance which directs organisational change researchers to examine the context behind resistance by change recipients. Moreover, it puts emphasis on the point that this resistance is potentially created, and hence, manageable by change agents.

We explore what role a change agent plays in organisational change and utilise the metaphor of ‘shock absorbers’ to dramatize the role of change agents. We are not first to utilise this metaphor; it has been used previously by Bourgeois (1981). However, the metaphor is barely used in the contemporary organisational change literature. We begin by examining what role a shock absorber plays. Without including the engineering details of functionality and design dynamics, in colloquial terminology a shock absorber is a device which absorbs or dampens shock impulses. It does this by converting one form of energy into another.

If it is that, as Van de Ven and Sun (2011) argue, ‘tensions and oppositions’ are inevitable in any organisational change initiative (Van de Ven & Sun, 2011), then some form of shock absorption would seem to provide an important function. The shock absorber provides a mechanism for the organisation to reconcile such tensions and oppositions, perhaps restoring a sort of functional balance in situations where change initiatives threaten the equilibrium of the organisation. If that is so, then the recent literature appears to recognise that resistance to change plays an important role in organisation change. This is exactly the reason why we have chosen this metaphor for organisational change agents as shock absorbers - organisations have the potential of using resistance to change to their advantage. This is likely to be through converting unsupportive or negative reactions into opportunities for constructive development, to gain support for the change initiative. Much current organisational change literature emphasises or examines the corrective actions change agents undertake to bring the change process back on track. However, this leads to the question of whether ‘fire-fighting’ via corrective measures is always the right strategy?

We further explored the literature to identify what strategies change agents have used and what theorists have suggested that change agents utilise. We borrow Van de Ven and Sun’s (2011) classification of change agent’s response strategies - action and reflection - that we briefly explain in the following section. Our analysis of the literature revealed two additional and crucial actions that change agents need to do in order to be effective shock absorbers. Firstly, change agents need to identify who or what really counts to manage stakeholder relationships in event of resistance. Secondly, they need to understand how adaptation forms an integral part in determining the right strategy.

THE RIGHT STRATEGY

Greenwood and Hinings (1996: 1045 cited in Tsoukas & Chia, 2002) suggested exploring micro-questions that will permit an understanding of the ‘non-linear processes’ to better understand organisational change. Tsoukas and Chia’s (2002: 568) interpretation of these ‘non-linear processes’ implies that one must be prepared for ‘emergence and surprise’ and ‘take into account the possibility of organisational change having ramifications and implications beyond those initially imagined and

planned'. Van de Ven and Sun (2011) point out there are numerous complexities associated with organisational change. Change agents can create bigger problems by adhering to their mental model of change and focusing on correcting any breakdowns, i.e., discrepancies from how they imagined/planned the change process to unfold (Van de Ven & Sun, 2011). Perhaps change agents are compelled to 'look straight ahead in the direction we have to go' and are concerned with living and acting (Bergson, 1946: 137 cited in Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). Additionally, they seem to be more interested in things themselves rather than looking at what use we can make of them (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). Recent studies focussing on how resistance affects the progress of change in an organisation help clarify its role and suggest ways we can make use of resistance to enhance the change process. However, it is likely that every change initiative creates its own tensions; it favours some values and overlooks others (Van de Ven & Sun, 2011). As Seo et al (2004: 101) stated, 'these tensions reflect choice points that people make, either implicitly or explicitly, as they initiate and/or implement a change program'. Thus, subjective sensemaking dynamics - the way people understand the change program - also has important implications for the effectiveness of the program (Ford et al. 2008; Ford & Ford, 2010; Pietersen et al. 2012; Weick, 1995).

So what is the right thing for a change agent to do? This issue can be explored through two related secondary questions: (1) should change agents respond or react to all kinds of resistance and (2) what is right strategy for change agents to adopt?

The principle of who or what really counts

These tensions can be triggered by either external or internal forces and could lead to positive or negative focus. The more important question for change agents to ask, however, is who are the privileged and the ignored (or subjugated) during the change process (Van de Ven & Sun, 2011)? We propose that this question can be addressed by acknowledging the role of change recipients as key stakeholders. Using Freeman's (1984: 46) definition of 'any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation's objective' as a starting point greatly broadens the number and influence of potential change agents. However, not all stakeholders will play a part. Thus, any change agent's response to tensions or opposition needs to be evaluated to determine 'who or what really counts'. In service to this, an organisation can examine the attributes of power, legitimacy and

urgency (Mitchell, Agle & Wood, 1997) as they describe the relevance of stakeholder groups. The three attributes can be defined as follows:

Salancik and Pfeffer (1974: 3) provide a useful definition of *power* as ‘the ability [of a person or group of people]... to bring about the outcomes they desire.’

Suchman (1995: 574) describes *legitimacy* as ‘proper or appropriate within some socially constructed systems of norms, values, beliefs and definitions’. Legitimacy thereby relates to socially accepted and expected structures or behaviours in an organisation.

A common definition of *urgency* will suffice. Derived from the word "urgent", the Merriam-Webster online dictionary offers ‘very important and needing immediate attention’. In the organisational change context, urgency exists only when a relationship is of time-sensitive nature and when a relationship or claim is critical to the stakeholder.

The seminal work of Mitchell et al. (1997) provides us with an evaluation of seven stakeholder types that can emerge from various combinations of these three attributes. They are graphically presented in Figure 1 below (see Mitchell et al. 1997 for a detailed discussion of these).

Insert Figure 1 about here

Often change agents utilise the concept of defensiveness to deal with resistance. However, Powell and Posner (1978) argued that the cost of defensiveness is the persistence of resistance. This then leads to a vicious cycle, where resistance begets resistance (Ford et al. 2008). Logically, an escalation to perpetual resistance is unlikely to lead to beneficial change in an organisation. Mitchell et al.’s (1997) classification, when applied to different stakeholder’s, may provide assistance in dealing appropriately with such situations, offering insight into stakeholders' motivations for resistance. This then can provide a means for arresting an escalation of resistance.

Action and reflection

We now approach Van de Ven and Sun’s (2011) categorisation of change agent strategy of action or reflection. In the action-oriented problem solving approach, the change agent intervenes to control a

change initiative. Control is exercised by playing the role of a problem solver, in order to ensure the change model unfolds as the change agent envisaged it.

In contrast, by the reflection strategy a change agent makes sense of and socially constructs understandings of the ‘buzzing, blooming, and confusing’ changes they experience in organisations (Weick, 2011). This sense-making revises one’s mental model, making it one that better fits the process of change unfolding in the organisation. ‘Reflection is turning one’s thoughts back upon or back to something that exists’, Weick (2011: 7) observes. This view is supported by Tsoukas and Chia’s (2002: 572), who suggested that by turning our attention away from practical matter and towards reflection, we can obtain a ‘direct vision of reality’ and hence begin to ‘appreciate its dynamic complexity’.

Adaptation

However, there appears to be an intermediary strategy between action and reflection that we consider is essential to both make those adjustments and fine-tune them to facilitate change. We have referred to this as *adaptation*. In the change context, *adaptation* is about diagnosing the breakdowns and knowing what treatment strategy to follow. The word ‘adapt’ occurs frequently in the organisational change literature, with particular reference to organisations adapting to fit their environments (Levin, 2003 Levinthal, 1994; Lewin et al, 2004; Nelson & Winter, 1982; Thompson, 1967). Similarly, proactive individuals adapt to their environments, often making use of rules to accomplish their purposes (Gibson, 1977; Norman, 1988). Borrowed from previous research, adaptation can be defined as ‘(a) the action or process of adapting, fitting, or suiting one thing to another... and (b) the process of modifying a thing so as to suit new conditions’ (Rose & Lauder, 1996: 42). Through adaptation, change agents can skilfully revise their mental model of change and ‘go with the flow’, as against ‘swimming upstream’ (Van de Ven & Sun, 2011). This has the potential for breaking the cycle of resistance leading to more resistance. The extensive body of research literature available suggests that by taking time to reflect on actions, change agents, can adapt their strategy in the most ‘fruitful and imaginative’ way to address any breakdown (Van de Ven & Sun, 2011). Pettigrew et al. (2001: 701) have accurately captured this when they suggest ‘customisation of change strategies’ which works best when we have clear knowledge of who and what really counts. By adapting to the conditions of

legitimacy, power, and urgency, a change agent is playing the role of an effective shock absorber that is essential in facilitating change. Figure 2 below represents our proposal on how an ideal shock absorber would function during a change process.

Insert Figure 2 about here

As our focus is resistance to change, we highlight what the recent literature recommends in dealing with this breakdown. Based on Huber and Lewis (2010), Randolph-Seng and Norris (2011) and Van de Ven and Sun (2011), it is clear that change agents can utilise frequent reflective meetings about the change process as a device for sharing and socially constructing common understandings of the changes being implemented and the goals the organisation is meant to achieve. During this process, the change agent needs to be open to ideas and different perspectives on the change initiative that can lead to positive learning outcomes. They also need to be flexible with regard to the ideas and actions those resisting change provide. The change agent also needs to acknowledge tensions rather than privileging one opinion (Seo et al. 2004). Such reflection and adaptation could result in constructive, combined co-creation of purpose, approach, and methods for facilitating the change process.

FUTURE RESEARCH AGENDA AND CONCLUSION

Change in an ongoing process in organisations (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002) as they are continuously engaged in change to survive or prosper (Binci et al. 2012). However, change rarely unfolds as planned because it encounters breakdowns, resistance to change, as change agents face difficulties in implementing the change model (Van de Ven & Sun, 2011). It may be, as Gleick (1987 cited in Burke & Litwin, 1992) suggests, that change is a type of chaos where a number of things change at the same time. Researchers are now arguing that resistance can be used as a positive influencer on organisational change (Ford et al, 2008). In this paper we propose that change agents need to be effective shock absorbers by utilising resistance to benefit organisational change. They can do this through identification of who and what really matters in the change process by identifying those having the attributes of power, urgency and legitimacy.

Our review of the literature revealed that change agents can use two different strategies to deal with resistance – action or reflection strategy. However, if we assume that the effectiveness of action in the absence of reflection is likely to be ‘self- defeating’ (Van de Ven & Sun, 2011: 59), the central challenge in complex organisations is achieving a balance between implementation actions and feedback reflection. We propose that an additional strategy of adaptation can achieve this balance. The model we have proposed in Figure 2 is theoretical and has not been tested empirically. We concur with Pettigrew et al.’s (2001) recommendation that any empirical research examining models will need to accommodate context. By incorporating and examining context, empirical research can obtain accounts of how the process unfolds and also examine actions and reactions of various change recipients. Additionally, we recommend using a process research approach, as it acknowledges the role of change agents and incorporates explanations based on deliberation and purpose (Poole et al. 2000) and gives attention to ‘activity over product’ (Langley & Tsoukas, 2010).

REFERENCES

- Austin, J., & Bartunek, J. (2003). Theories and practices of organization development. In W. Borman, D. Ilgen & R. Klimoski (Eds.), *Handbook of psychology - Industrial and organizational psychology* (Vol. 12). New York: Wiley.
- Balogun, J., & Hope-Hailey, V. (2008). Exploring strategic change. Harlow: FT Prentice Hall. Financial Times.
- Battilana, J., & Casciaro, T. (2012). Change agents, networks, and institutions: A contingency theory of organizational change. *Academy of Management Journal*, 55(2), 381-398.
- Beer, M., & Nohria, N. (2000). Cracking the code of change. If you read nothing else on change, read these best-selling articles, 15.
- Bourgeois, L. J. (1981). On the measurement of organizational slack. *Academy of management Review*, 6(1), 29-39.
- Braybrooke, D., & Lindblom, C. E. (1963). *A strategy of decision: Policy evaluation as a social process*. New York: Free Press of Glencoe.

- Burke, W., & Litwin, G. (1992). A casual model of organizational performance and change. *Journal of Management, 18*, 523-545.
- Burke, W. W. (2009). Understanding organizations: The process of diagnosis. . In W. W. Burke, D. G. Lake & J. W. Paine (Eds.), *Organization change: A comprehensive reader* (pp. 259-272). San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Burke, W. W., Lake, D. G., & Paine, J. W. (2008). *Organization change: A comprehensive reader* (Vol. 155): John Wiley & Sons.
- Burnes, B. (2004). *Managing Change: A Strategic Approach to Organisational Dynamics*. Harlow: Prentice Hall.
- By, R. T. (2005). Organisational change management: A critical review. *Journal of Change Management, 5*(4), 369-380.
- Collins, C. J., & Smith, K. G. (2006). Knowledge exchange and combination: The role of human resource practices in the performance of high-technology firms. *Academy of Management Journal, 49*(3), 544-560.
- Cummings, T. G., & Worley, C. G. (2005). *Organization development and change*. Cincinnati, OH: South-Western College Publishing.
- Cyert, R. M., & March, J. G. (1963). *A Behavioural Theory of the Firm*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Downs, A., & Carlon, D. (2012). Resistance to change as a positive influencer: an introduction. *Journal of Organizational Change Management, 25*(6).
- Duncan, M., Mouly, S., & Nilakant, V. (2001). Discontinuous change in the New Zealand police service- A case study. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 16*(1), 6-19.
- Ford, J. D., & Ford, L. W. (2010). Stop blaming resistance to change and start using it. *Organizational Dynamics, 39*(1), 24-36.
- Ford, J. D., Ford, L. W., & D'Amelio, A. (2008). Resistance to change: The rest of the story. *Academy of management Review, 33*(2), 362-377.
- Freeman, R. E. (1984). *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*. Marshfield, Massachusetts: Pitman.

- French, W. L., & Bell, C. H. (1995). *Organization development: Behavioural science interventions for organization improvement* (Vol. 5th Edition). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Gersick, C. J. (1991). Revolutionary change theories: A multilevel exploration of the punctuated equilibrium paradigm. *Academy of management review*, *16*(1), 10-36.
- Gioia, D. A., & Chittipeddi, K. (1991). Sensemaking and sensegiving in strategic change initiation. *Strategic management journal*, *12*(6), 433-448.
- Glieck, J. (1987). *Chaos: Making a new science*. New York: Viking, 23.
- Greenberg, D. N. (1995). Blue vs. Gray: A Metaphor constraining sensemaking around a restructuring. *Group and Organization Management*, *20*, 183-209.
- Greenwood, R., & Hinings, C. R. (1996). Understanding radical organizational change: Bringing together the old and the new institutionalism. *Academy of management Review*, *21*(4), 1022-1054.
- Grundy, T. (1993). *Managing Strategic Change* London: Kogan Page.
- Hofer, C. W., & Schendel, D. E. (1978). *Strategy formulation: analysis and concepts*. St. Paul, MN: West Publishing.
- Huber, G. P., & Lewis, K. (2010). Cross-understanding: Implications for group cognition and performance. *Academy of management Review*, *35*(1), 6-26.
- Kärreman, D. (2010). The power of knowledge: learning from 'learning by knowledge-intensive firm'. *Journal of Management Studies*, *47*(7), 1405-1416.
- Kärreman, D., & Alvesson, M. (2009). Resisting resistance: Counter-resistance, consent and compliance in a consultancy firm. *Human relations*, *62*(8), 1115-1144.
- Klein, K. J., & Sorra, J. S. (1996). The challenge of innovation implementation. *Academy of management Review*, *21*(4), 1055-1080.
- Kraatz, M. S., & Block, E. S. (2008). Organizational implications of institutional pluralism. *The Sage handbook of organizational institutionalism*, *840*, 243-275.
- Langley, A., & Tsoukas, H. (2010). Introducing perspectives on process organization studies. *Process, sensemaking, and organizing*, *1*(1).
- Levin, S. A. (2003). Complex adaptive systems: Exploring the known, the unknown, and the unknowable. *Bulletin of the American Mathematical Society*, *40*, 3-19.

- Levinthal, D. A. (1994). Surviving Schumpeterian Environments: An Evolutionary Perspective. In J. A. C. Baum & J. V. Singh (Eds.), *Evolutionary Dynamics of Organizations*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lewin, A. Y., Weigelt, C. B., & Emery, J. D. (2004). Adaptation and Selection in Strategy and Change: Perspectives in Strategic Change in Organizations. In M. S. Poole & A. H. Van de Ven (Eds.), *Handbook of Organizational Change and Innovation*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lewin, K. (1951). *Field Theory in social science*. New York: Harper.
- Lindblom, C. E. (1968). *The Policymaking Process*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Luecke, R. (2003). *Managing Change and Transition*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Macri, D. M., Tagliaventi, M. R., & Bertolotti, F. (2002). A grounded theory for resistance to change in a small organization. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 15(3), 292-310.
- Mahadevan, J. (2012). Utilizing identity-based resistance for diversity change: a narrative approach. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 25(6), 819-834.
- Meaney, M., & Pung, C. (2008). McKinsey global results: Creating organizational transformations. *The McKinsey Quarterly*, August, 1-7.
- Meyer, A. D., Goes, J. B., & Brooks, G. R. (1993). Organizations reacting to hyperturbulence. In G. P. Huber & W. H. Glick (Eds.), *Organizational change and re-design*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Miller, D. (1982). Evolution and Revolution: A Quantum View of Structural Change in Organizations. *Journal of Management Studies*, 19(2), 131-151.
- Miller, D., & Friesen, P. H. (1980). Momentum and revolution in organizational adaptation. . *Academy of management journal*, 23(4), 591-614.
- Miller, D., & Friesen, P. H. (1982). Innovation in conservative and entrepreneurial firms: two models of strategic momentum. . *Strategic management journal*, 3(1), 1-25.
- Miller, D., & Friesen, P. H. (1984). A longitudinal study of the corporate life cycle. *Management science*, 30(10), 1161-1183.

- Mitchell, R. K., Agle, B. R., & Wood, D. J. (1997). Toward a Theory of Stakeholder Identification and Saliency: Defining the Principle of Who and What Really Counts. *The Academy of Management Review*, 22(4), 853-886.
- Nelson, R. R., & Winter, S. G. (1982). *An evolutionary theory of economic change*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Nutt, P. C., & Wilson, D. C. (2010). *Handbook of decision making* (Vol. 6): John Wiley & Sons.
- Pettigrew, A. M., Woodman, R. W., & Cameron, K. S. (2001). Studying Organisational Change and Development: Challenges for Future Research. *Academy of Management Journal*, 44(4), 697-713.
- Pfeffer, J. (1992). *Managing with power: Politics and influence in organizations*: Harvard Business Press.
- Pfeffer, J., & Salancik, G. R. (1974). Organizational decision making as a political process: The case of a university budget. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 135-151.
- Pieterse, J. H., Caniëls, M. C., & Homan, T. (2012). Professional discourses and resistance to change. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 25(6), 798-818.
- Pitsakis, K., Biniari, M. G., & Kuin, T. (2012). Resisting change: organizational decoupling through an identity construction perspective. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 25(6), 835-852.
- Poole, M. S., & Van de Ven, A. H. (2004). Theories of Organizational Change and Innovation Processes. In M. S. Poole & A. H. Van de Ven (Eds.), *Handbook of Organizational Change and Innovation*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Poole, M. S., Van de Ven, A. H., Dooley, K., & Holmes, M. (2000). *Organizational change and innovation processes: Theory and methods for research*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Pratt, M. G., & Kraatz, M. S. (2009). E pluribus unum: Multiple identities and the organizational self. *Exploring positive identities and organizations: Building a theoretical and research foundation*, 385-410.
- Randolph-Seng, B., & Norris, J. I. (2011). Cross-Understanding in Groups: How to “Cross Over” Without “Dying”. *Academy of management Review*, 36(2), 420-422.

- Romanelli, E., & Tushman, M. L. (1994). Organizational transformation as punctuated equilibrium: An empirical test. *Academy of Management Journal*, 37(5), 1141-1166.
- Rose, M. R., & Lauder, G. V. (1996). *Adaptation*. San Diego: Academic Press.
- Senior, B. (2002). *Organisational Change* (2nd ed.). London: Prentice Hall.
- Senior, B., & Swailes, S. (2010). *Organizational Change*. Harlow: Pearson Education.
- Seo, M., Putnam, L. L., & Bartunek, J. M. (2004). Dualities and tensions of planned organizational change. In M. S. Poole & A. H. Van de Ven (Eds.), *Handbook of organizational change and innovation*, 73-107. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Stryker, S., & Serpe, R. T. (1982). Commitment, identity salience, and role behaviour: Theory and research example *Personality, roles, and social behavior* (pp. 199-218): Springer.
- Suchman, M. C. (1995). Managing legitimacy: Strategic and institutional approaches. *Academy of management Review*, 20(3), 571-610.
- Thompson, J. D. (1967). *Organization in action: Social science bases of administrative theory*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Tsoukas, H., & Chia, R. (2002). On Organizational Becoming: Rethinking Organizational Change. *Organization Science*, 13(5), 567-582.
- Tushman, M. L., Newman, W. H., & Romanelli, E. (1986). Convergence and upheaval: Managing the unsteady pace of organizational evolution. *California Management Review*, 29(1), 29-44.
- Tushman, M. L., & Romanelli, E. (1985). Organizational Evolution: A metamorphosis model of convergence and reorientation. In B. Staw & L. Cummings (Eds.), *Research in Organizational Behavior* (Vol. 7). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Van de Ven, A. H., & Poole, M. S. (1995). Explaining Development and Change in Organizations. *Academy of management Review*, 20, 510-540.
- Van de Ven, A. H., & Sun, K. (2011). Breakdowns in implementing models of organization change. *The Academy of Management Perspectives*, 25(3), 58-74.
- Walker, H. J., Armenakis, A. A., & Bernerth, J. B. (2007). Factors influencing organizational change efforts: An integrative investigation of change content, context, process and individual differences. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 20(6), 761-773.

Weick, K. (1995). *Sensemaking in Organizations*. Thousand Oaks: CA: Sage.

Weick, K., & Quinn, R. E. (1999). Organizational change and development. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 50, 361-386.

Weick, K. E. (2011). Reflections: Change agents as change poets—On reconnecting flux and hunches. *Journal of Change Management*, 11(1), 7-20.

TABLES

Table 1: Organisational change research over the decades

| Organisational change... | Researcher (s) |
|--|--|
| progresses through three stages – unfreeze , change/moving , and refreeze | Lewin (1951) |
| piecemeal (gradual and incremental) or quantum (concerted and dramatic) | Braybrooke & Lindblom (1963); Cyert & March (1963) Lindblom (1968); Miller & Friesen (1982) |
| evolutionary (incremental changes which are gradual and only few elements change either in a minor or a major way) or revolutionary (quantum changes which radically transform many elements of a structure) | Miller (1982) |
| planned (consciously conceived and implemented by knowledgeable actors) or unplanned (may or may not be driven by human choice; could move the organisation in either desirable or undesirable directions) | French & Bell (1995); Austin & Bartunek (2003); Seo, Putnam & Bartunek (2004) |
| continuous (continuous in a fundamental manner to keep up with the fast moving pace of change) or discontinuous (marked by rapid shifts in either strategy, structure or culture, or in all three) | Tushman, Newman & Romanelli (1986); Grundy (1993); Senior (2002); Luecke (2003); Burnes (2004) |
| first order (aimed at increasing skill or solving problems in an already agreed upon arena) or second order (connotes efforts aimed at changing organisational members' frames of reference or ways that they understand key components and functions of organising) | Meyer, Goes & Brooks (1993); Seo, Putnam & Bartunek (2004) |
| episodic (infrequent, discontinuous and intentional) or | Weick & Quinn (1999) |

| | |
|--|---|
| continuous (ongoing, evolving, and cumulative) | |
| progressing through punctuated equilibrium (organisations are evolving through relatively long periods of stability (equilibrium periods) in their basic patterns of activity that are punctuated by relatively short bursts of fundamental change (revolutionary change)) | Miller & Friesen (1980; 1984) Gersick (1991); Tushman & Romanelli (1985); Romanelli & Tushman (1994) |
| progresses through any of the four processes: life cycle, teleological, dialectic or evolution | Van de Ven & Poole (1995) |

FIGURES

Figure 1: Seven stakeholder types (adopted from Mitchell, Agle & Wood, 1997: 874)

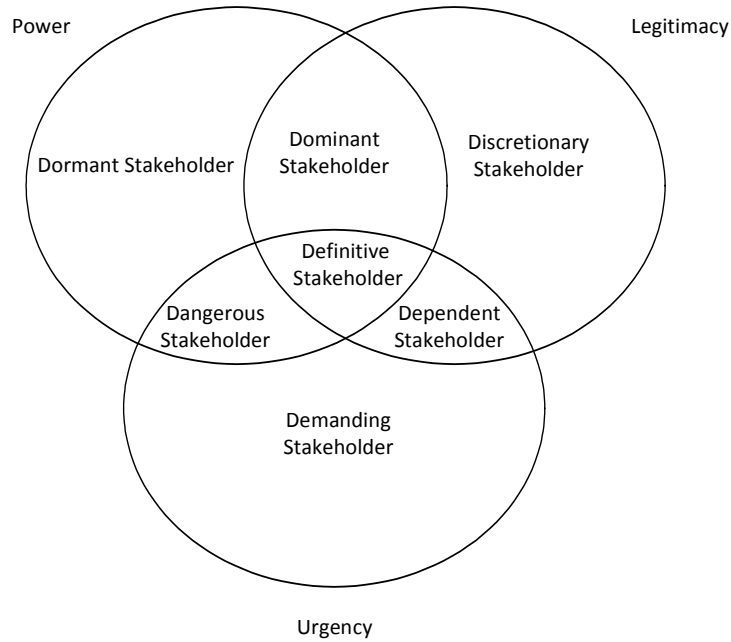


Figure 2: An ideal shock absorber to facilitate the change process

