

RESISTANCE TO THE ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

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Abstract: *Generally, from an organizational point of view, the resistance to change is described as an irrational and counterproductive behavior, manifested by a minority within an organization, which leads to some negative consequences for the entire system and, ultimately, even on those who adopt such behavior. In other words, the resistance to change is a bad thing. However, it seems that things need to be nuanced, because there are many cases in everyday practice when the resistance to change is beneficial or positive, such as some doctors who refuse a change because their patients would suffer. Therefore this is not a simple problem. Investing resistance to change with positive or negative valences depends mostly on the perspective from which we evaluate the situation.*

Key words: *Organizational Change, Resistance to Change, Organizational Efficiency.*

JEL Classification Codes: I20, I21, I22, I25, D40.

1. INTRODUCTION

From an organizational point of view, the resistance to change is described as an irrational and counterproductive behavior, manifested by a minority within an organization, which leads to some negative consequences for the entire system and, ultimately, even on those who adopt such behavior. In other words, the resistance to change is a bad thing. However, it seems that things need to be nuanced, because there are many cases in everyday practice when the resistance to change is beneficial or positive, such as some doctors who refuse a change because their patients would suffer. Therefore this is not a simple problem. Investing resistance to change with positive or negative valences depends mostly on the perspective from which we evaluate the situation.

Subjectively, it is possible that some members of the organization see a certain behavior as positive, worthy of all praise, called "constructive resistance", while others view it from a negative perspective, called "destructive resistance" in the literature. Most of the theories regarding resistance to change come from management and approach, in particular, the problem of overcoming resistance to change as quickly and efficiently as possible. From this point of view, it is obvious that resistance to change is seen as a negative phenomenon, against which you must fight and which must be defeated, in order to ensure the smooth running of the company in the future.

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Many papers and studies have been published since 1940, encouraging managers to overcome the resistance to change within the company they lead (Coch&French, 1948). This approach has its origins in a well-known study, which systematically addressed, for the first time, the issue of organizational efficiency from the perspective of resistance to change. This is the study conducted in 1948, on Harwood Manufacturing Corporation, a company that produced



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textiles (pajamas). The company was located in Marion and had 600 employees, of which only 100 were men. Most of them were from rural areas and had no experience in the industrial field. The average age of the employees was 23 years old, and the educational level was around the 8th grade. Shortly before the study started, the company went through a process of change, decided by the board, in order to increase its efficiency and competitiveness on the market. The main change was the introduction of a new technology and a new way of dividing work / activity. The main problem facing Harwood Corporation was the resistance to those changes from the employees, resistance that materialized in a low level of efficiency, high rate of staff turnover, employee aggression towards management, obvious reluctance of employees when they had to perform certain duties and tasks (Beltran&Ruffat, 1991).

These problems seemed quite surprising, especially because that company promoted a liberal managerial style, being particularly concerned with the human resources. Thus, the salaries were satisfactory (there were two types of minimum wages, some valid for new employees and another, which was 22% higher than the first, for the employees who had minimum 6 month experience). Also, although the work norms were quite high, they were not impossible to achieve (the average norm was 60 units of product per hour and, on average, it took about 34 weeks for an employee to acquire the ability to achieve a full-time job). They worked under individual labor agreements. In order to raise the morale of the employees and to increase the competitiveness, lists were displayed every day with the performances of each one, emphasizing the employees who fulfilled or exceeded the work norm.

However, problems occurred when the new technologies were introduced, problems that required the transfer of some of the employees from one field to another. Initially, it was considered that resistance to change was determined by the inability of workers to adapt to the new jobs, thus rejecting the interventions of managers, even if they were good. This fact was also reinforced by the fact that only 39% of the transferred workers managed to return to the performance of 60 units / hour.

The authors of this study pointed out that resistance to change is an extremely complex process, which does not depend only on the job change, especially since both workers who managed to return to the original norm and those who had not been transferred showed an attitude of rejection towards the change initiated by the managers (Bass&Bass, 2008).

In their study, Coch and French (1948) started from the presumption that, within the “disruptive” resistance, the dynamics and the group norms have the same importance as the individual features. To test this hypothesis, they organized a series of meetings of work groups / teams, on which occasion, some of the employees were explained the reasons for the changes that bothered them and why it was necessary to co-operate to increase the efficiency of the organization; others were not offered such explanations. Following this experiment, the two authors found that for the employees who received explanations for changes the resistance to change decreased considerably, while those in the group who were not offered any explanations remained reluctant and resistant to the changes proposed by the management.

Through this approach, Coch and French (1948) demonstrated that the explanation of the measures taken by the management and the co-participation of employees in their implementation are extremely important aspects, as they considerably reduce the resistance to change of the employees. In other words, resistance to change can be seen as a combination of particular, individual reactions to frustration and intense group forces.

This was one of the first studies highlighting the importance of using group methods to overcome resistance to change, having an important role in convincing managers to adopt and use methods based on group participation, in order to successfully introduce various changes at the organizational level (Roșca&Stănescu, 2014).

Another equally important theory regarding “how to overcome resistance to change” is “the field theory”, encountered in the literature and as “the force field analysis”, developed by one of the fathers of organizational sociology and psychology, Kurt Lewin (1951). Lewin sees organizations as systems that are in a state of equilibrium, stable, between equal forces, but opposite in direction. On the one hand, it talks about the forces that are "pro-change" (for example, new technologies, competitive pressure, creativity and innovation in a company, new laws in the field of economy, labor and employee rights, environmental protection, etc.) , and on the other hand, as a counterbalance, there are the “resistance forces” (which include the tradition and customs of an organization, the organizational culture and climate, the treaties and conventions that were concluded with the unions, etc.). These two sets of forces are considered to have equal intensities, canceling each other out, to keep the organizational system in balance. Therefore, in order to introduce a certain change, it is necessary to destabilize the balance between the two, to strengthen the forces that are "pro-change", so that they can annihilate the "resistance" ones. Once this has been done, a new state of equilibrium is reached, which includes the elements and the situation that we wanted to introduce in the organization, through the change that we have achieved. Therefore this is a temporary fracture of the balance between forces, a pressure that ceases when the desired state has become an integral part of the reality of that organization.

The literature has highlighted the following levels of organizational change:

1) The individual level

At the individual level, two types of factors have been identified, with particular importance for resistance to change: the personality and the previous experience of the individual. Regarding the previous experience, Kotter and Schlesinger (1979) consider that attitudes that are based on each other's personal experiences of organizational change are caused by four major factors: lack of confidence in change, stemming from a misunderstanding of why it occurs; very narrow personal interests; low level of tolerance to change; contradictory evaluations of one and the same process, depending on the position that the individual occupies in the organization (Iacob&Cismaru, 2002).

2) The group level

Regarding the resistance that groups show to the phenomenon of change, it appears as a consequence of factors that are inherent in the composition, structure, set of intra-group relations, which define the status quo. But in this case, it must be specified that, in terms of the intensity of resistance to change, that of a group is much higher than that of the individual and is therefore more difficult to overcome. And in this case, the distribution of power and authority affects the extent to which employees / groups are resistant to change.

3) The organizational level

In case of the organizational level, we can talk about a kaleidoscopic image of resistance to change, influenced by many factors that determine resistance to change. The most important of these factors are: the structure of the organization, the culture and the organizational climate, the leadership style and the decision making, the strategies used by the managers. These factors have a particular influence on the form and intensity of the employees' resistance to change.

The changing conditions of the organizational environment have determined the need to expand the content of work tasks and the scope of decisions that executors must take, without seeking the consent of managers. In some situations, these processes extend to individual work tasks, and in other situations, to collective work in groups of individuals. Currently, there is an increasing emphasis on changing the vertical relationships of the hierarchy, by passing a growing responsibility to subordinates who are located at lower hierarchical levels (Vagu&Stegăroiu, 2006).

3. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, there are many factors shaping the levels of resistance to change for the employees. The resistance to change is determined by two types of variables:

- the first category includes the characteristics of the space the organizational change occurs and the level it addresses (for example the individual factors, the group factors and the organizational ones);
- the second category refers to the act against which the resistance to change is manifested (since it is not a pro-active phenomenon, but a reactive one); more precisely, it is about the type and the form of this act.

Another aspect related to resistance to change, which has been researched by the specialists in the field is related to the direction of change. Most of the studies focused especially on the changes that were introduced from top to bottom, planned and implemented by the management. However, there are also changes "from bottom to top", as a result of the proposals made by the subordinates. In the case of "bottom-up" changes, the resistance to change is influenced by four categories of factors (Nicolescu, 2004): the nature of the change proposal (the depth and generality of the change); the axiological (value) orientation of the decision-making authority; the organizational distance - the number of hierarchical levels existing between the one who proposes the change and the one who has the final decision; the costs of change which are usually assessed in terms of the investment made by the organization to ensure the necessary conditions for the change.

If this situation is accepted axiomatically, it can be considered that the resistance to the bottom-up change will be slightly higher than the top-down change, because in order for a bottom-up change to be successful, it must convince managers first, and only then implemented at the organizational level (Strati, 1992).

In conclusion, the resistance to change is not an eminently negative phenomenon, as seen in most of the management literature. It suffers from multiple influences, which can be classified into two types: on the one hand, the "causes" of resistance to change (including individual, group and organizational factors), and on the other hand the nature / form of change that these factors generate.

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