

**“An investigation into the effects of employee resistance to  
the planning and design of organisational change”**



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## **Abstract**

*“If there is no struggle, there is no progress”*. Frederick Douglass

Over our history there is one ever present factor to all our lives that we cannot escape. Change is relentless in every group, every organisation and every industry and while we may try to delay or undermine the need for it, nonetheless we are all subject to it. It is a phenomenon that in the last decade especially is facing organisations of every type with the ever increasing pace of our environment. To survive in this environment organisations are forced to both accept the necessity for change and embrace the consequences of it. With this, organisations must be prepared to constantly adapt and have the individuals needed to move from their current position to a more productive state. This calls upon the skills of management to implement the designs and plans necessary to adapt smoothly to new processes and systems, but more importantly to gain maximum value from the members of their organisation to ensure they do so.

Therefore, the focus of this study was on the management of change within Irish organisations, the resistance that arose as a result of the change design and the eventual impact this had on the resulting process. To achieve this, a qualitative study was implemented in the form of semi-structured interviews with employees from four different companies in order to gain the perspective from those who both initiate the change and experience the greatest affect from it. This highlights their experiences of change events, the events they witnessed unfold and the impact they eventually had on the final outcome.

From conducting primary research various findings have arisen showing the effects of resistance to new change initiatives, their design and eventual outcomes. The author looked to contribute to an area of research that has not previously been focused on in as much depth as comparative change topics. Further to this there is evidential scope for conducting additional research in this area using more in-depth research methods and literature.

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## **Ethical Declaration**

I declare that this dissertation is wholly my own work except where I have made explicit references to the work of others. I have read the Structured Masters Programs Research Policy, Procedures and Guidelines and hereby declare that this dissertation is in line with these requirements. I have discussed, agreed and complied with whatever confidentiality or anonymity terms of reference were deemed appropriate by those participating in the research.

I have uploaded the entire dissertation as one file to Turnitin® in Moodle, examined my 'Originality Report' by viewing the detail behind the overall 'Similarity Index', and have addressed any matches that exceed 3% when quotations and bibliography are excluded. I have made every effort to minimise my overall 'Similarity Index' score and the number of matches occurring.

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Donnacha Ryan

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**Word Count: 16,579**



## **List of Abbreviations**

**SAP** – Systems Applications Products

*This research is dedicated to the memory of my loving mother Ann (R.I.P.) who I know watches over me. Not a day goes by where I don't remember the sacrifices you made for your family and the love and care you showed us all.*

*“Let us tenderly and kindly cherish, therefore, the means of knowledge. Let us dare to read, think, speak, and write.”* John Adams

*Chapter One:*  
*Introduction*

# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction**

### **1.1 Introduction**

The following chapter will provide a general overview of the dissertation as a whole. It will include a rationale and justification of the study, an outline of the research question to be addressed, the main objectives within the research question and the methodology used to achieve these objectives. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the dissertation structure.

### **1.2 Purpose of the study**

The underlying purpose of this study is to examine the implementation of change within Irish organisations and how it is managed. The author aims to analyse how change processes are initiated and controlled throughout their implementation and subsequently how resistance to these processes are handled. In doing so, the author will aim to analyse recent change efforts made by organisations within Irish industries, the processes undertaken and the eventual outcomes of their techniques from a staff motivation perspective. Further to this, an examination will be made into the responses received from employees towards planned change processes. This will focus on the support or resistance shown towards management efforts, their feelings as to their inclusion in the change initiative and the adherence of senior officials to employee opinions on change designs. Therefore the author endeavours to highlight the main impacts that employee resistance to change can bring to an implementation perspective and what it can offer to the more efficient implementation of change efforts.

### **1.3 Justification of the Study**

According to Dervitsiotis (2007), the great challenge for organisations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is to develop the capability to survive and grow in the presence of rapid change. The economic downturn of 2007 brought with it the need for immediate adaptation and change by organisations in order to remain viable entities. It is critical for companies that adaptation and change is done both in an effective and efficient manner taking into account the impact it will have on all stakeholders of the business ensuring the smooth implementation. All too often one key resource within an organisation is ignored or its impact on change taken for granted.

The role of employees in the change process is possibly the most underrated and underutilised resource when seeking the correct and most efficient systems of implementation by management. As a result, during certain cases where poor planning and design is present and a reluctance to include employees exists, resistance from staff can often emerge due to these flaws. All too often however this resistance is cast in a negative light with management and researchers viewing simply the negative aspects of it rather than casting a broader view and exploring the possible benefits that can be derived from the issue. Since the 2007 downturn companies have been under constant pressure to restructure, re-plan and rebuild their organisations under short time periods which have caused many businesses to implement change plans that do not fit with the company structure, strategy and other aspects of the business. In certain instances the most prominent way to identify and understand problems is by being person it impacts the most. In the majority of circumstances this person is the lower level employees who see firsthand the changes brought about and the potential flaws or benefits contained within them. Therefore the author will investigate the substantial contributions that can be derived through the area of employee resistance to organisational change for future management restructuring plans.

#### **1.4 Research Question and Objectives**

For the purpose of this study, the author is investigating the following research question:

*“What are the effects of employee resistance to the planning and design of organisational change?”*

In order to satisfy the above research question, four research objectives were designed for investigation as guidance for the study:

1. To analyse the necessity of change and the rationale behind the planning and implementation stages of change initiatives.
2. To examine the levels of involvement and co-operation from management with employees and their input into plans and strategies.
3. Examine the effectiveness of the implementation strategies and show the varying degrees of resistance to the change initiatives and its affect on the organisation.
4. Uncover the impact resistance from employees to the change had on the initial strategies and the overall result of the new process.

## **1.5 Research Methodology**

The author's research was collected from existing secondary data sources and the use of qualitative primary research to meet the specific research question and objectives. The author has conducted his research in a qualitative manner which will allow for a more in-depth and comprehensive analysis of how each of the subject organisations deal with change. Firstly the collected secondary data has been collected to provide the basis for the literature and help to identify potential research problems. However, this data has proved to be insufficient in itself and thus it established where primary research is necessary. The current literature largely focuses on the subjects of the implementation of change, the change process itself and the conductors of change. Further research will be undertaken into the areas of resistance to change, the causes of it and the effects it has on the organisation and the change process. Finally during the secondary research collection stage the author will look at the broad area of sensemaking with employees and the perceptions they possess during the change process.

Secondly the author conducted semi-structured interviews for the purpose of qualitative research in order to explore the research question and objectives. These interviews have been performed with a reasonably open framework which enables two-way communication that can be both focused and conversational. Questions were prepared in advance of all interviews, however many have been created during the interview process making it adaptable to explore further details and issues that arose.

## **1.6 Structure of the Dissertation**

### **1.6.1 Chapter 1-Introduction**

The first chapter is an informative section that introduces the reader to the topic. It includes the purpose of the paper as perceived by the author and provides relevant justification for carrying out the study. It further outlines the main research question and the objectives that will provide the basis for the investigation and guide the study along with the methods of research employed to pursue these objectives and the possible contribution it may make to organisations and other researchers.

### **1.6.2 Chapter Two and Three-Literature Review**

Chapter two of the literature review will provide an overview of the concept of change, the need for it and the methods employed by management when communicating and implementing change processes. Chapter three of the literature will examine the perspectives

of employees as regards change processes, the resistance they show to unsatisfactory change and the resulting outcomes for businesses and management from this resistance.

### **1.6.3 Chapter Four-Research Methodology**

Chapter four provides details of the objectives of this research, the chosen data collection methods used to collect primary data and the limitations to the study. The research design and system will be outlined along with the advantages and disadvantages of the methods of data collection in this chapter.

### **1.6.4 Chapter Five-Primary Research Findings**

Chapter five provides details of the companies in which interviews will be held with an overview as to their size and industry position. The chapter will continue to present findings from the primary research conducted.

### **1.6.5 Chapter Six-Discussion**

Chapter six presents a discussion on the findings from the previous chapter against the literature previously provided and address the initial research objectives set out. From this the chapter will look to establish whether the findings support or contradict previous studies.

### **1.6.6 Chapter Seven-Conclusion & Recommendations**

The final chapter concludes the paper with a review of the entire dissertation along with summarising the key findings that have been identified and also contains a number of recommendations for further research along with an outline of the limitations of the study.

## **1.7 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this chapter introduces the purpose of the study along with providing justification for the research carried out. Furthermore, the research question and objectives have been outlined along with the methodology intended for collecting the necessary data needed to satisfy the objectives. The final structure of the dissertation was also described in detail.



*Chapter Two:*  
*Literature Review I*

## Chapter two

### Literature Review I

#### 2.1 Introduction

The function of this chapter is to provide an overview of the various theories and ideas that surround the concept of organisational change. In chapter one, organisational change will be defined while the main drivers for change have been presented. This will then be followed by the communication of change within organisations and its importance by senior and middle managers. Finally there will be a summary of the literature presented.

According to Goldstein and Warner Burke (1991), in the present environment organisational change is becoming a natural way of life and those that survive are organisations that have a competency to enact in persistent change. Burnes (2004) believes that at strategic and operational level change is an on-going feature within organisations. Within organisational life today, change is seen to be the one constant. Chinese philosopher Confucius stated, *“it is only the wisest and stupidest of men that never change”*. Appelbaum et al., (1998) believe change to be possibly the most significant issue facing organisations and their stakeholders. Further to this they state, change can be one of the most difficult processes for organisations and management to implement, yet the intrinsic need for such forces management to constantly examine new strategies for successful adaptation. Change can become necessary at any point in the life of an organisation due to newly emergent needs, foreseen or unforeseen goals and can prove to have both beneficial and detrimental impacts to both the members within the organisation and the organisation itself.

Kotter (2007) stated that to be more competitive in today's environment, organisations both large and small will attempt to remake themselves. These attempts as he explains may include different strategies, be it a need for restructuring, downsizing or reorganising. In relation to this, change can become necessary at any time due to planned or emergent issues while also being beneficial or detrimental to individuals or the organisation itself. The willingness for change from members of the organisations can be the most prominent aspect attributed to the either the successful adaptation to change or the ultimate failure of new system introductions. The successful implementation of new change systems means creating an environment that understands and accepts the need for change. Without motivation, co-

operation between leaders and employees will suffer, meaning the transformation to a new structure will ultimately fail. Kotter (2007) states that a successful transformation requires teamwork due to organisations underestimating the challenges in implementing change.

The following Literary Review looks to identify the main research carried out by the various relevant authors on this vast subject and the underlying issues that cause the greatest concern for management. These issues concern the elements of organisational change that exist and the effects that are derived from it, along with the perspectives of the people who most prominently witness the change and cause resistance to it. The author will look to combine these issues with the intention of deriving elements of positivity to change and the benefits that can arise from it for both organisations and employees.

## **2.2 Organisational Change**

Organisational change by definition, as quoted by Todd (1999, pp. 3) is:

“A structured and systematic approach to achieving a sustainable change in human behaviour within an organisation”.

As Todd further explains, it mainly concerns transitioning employees of a functioning organisation into more innovative behavioural routines whilst maintaining key core competencies, competitive advantages and customer relations. Spencer-Matthews (2001) view the concept in a similar vein when describing it as an arbitration and review of collective sense-making in context to what should be valued and aspired to within an organisation. Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) explain the nature of strategic change which at its core is a cognitive reorganisation of an organisation. Mintzberg and Walters (1985) and Tichy (1983) define strategic change as “one that reflects an acceptance of perceptual, structural and contextual discontinuities that occurs through the shifting interplay of deliberate and emergent processes”.

## **2.3 Change Management**

As identified by Worren (1999), change management can be categorised into two segments; proactive or reactive.

**Proactive change:** Occurs from internal sourcing from management that instigate change to achieve goals.

**Reactive change:** This on the other hand is due to responses from the micro-environment and other external sources. Ceasar and Stubbings (2012) state that if management are to take the success of organisations in the long term seriously, a more inclusive perspective on change must be taken.

As described by Jamali et al. (2006), “every type of modern organisation has little choice but to adapt to the relentless pace of change or it faces the risk of failure”. Beer and Nohria (2000) state that “most traditional organisations have accepted, in theory at least, that they must either change or die” due to new opportunities arising from every economy whilst this also brings with it confusion and panic as companies realise the essentialness of change management. Ragsdell (2000) emphasises that the main function of an organisational change initiative is to reposition an organisation to a state that is viewed as being more progressive and favourable to its long term strategy. Burnes (2004) therefore stipulates that organisations are well informed of considerable need to recognise what their future state must be and how they will reach their desired position. In relation to the management of change, Recklies (2001) argues that aspects such as planning, initiating, realising and controlling as well as the need for an affective stabilisation is required from both a corporate and a personal level. This necessitates vision within an organisation to see a developing need for change before it becomes unavoidable and a crisis state emerges, but more importantly courage from management to implement this change (Sadler, 1998).

## **2.4 Drivers for Change**

Most change initiatives, as highlighted by Kotter (2006), stem from triggers for change. Rapidly changing technology, globalisation, uncertainty, unpredictability, volatility, surprise, turbulence, and discontinuity are commonly presented in the literature as some of the major new environmental forces or triggers for change that now face organisations (Brodbeck, 2002; Bunker, 1997; Wang and Ahmed, 2003). “The constancy of change is a widely noted theme in any reading of the literature of organisational management” (Smith, 2011, pp. 111-128). He further makes highlight to the fact that it is not a new concept and that all things are in a constant state of fluctuation. Brown and Eisenhardt (1997) observe the need to focus on incessant change and that it is endemic to the way many organisations compete. While Tsoukas and Chia (2002) also argue that it should be a condition of organisational life and seen as normal behaviour. Organisational change capability (OCC) is conceptualised into three collective elements that determine the efficiency for companies that implement

incessant organisational change. As described by McGuinness and Morgan (2005) these are: a suitable foundation for incessant change, the ability to shape it, and sustaining the energy of it.

#### **2.4.1 Internal Sources**

Rollinson et al., (1998) emphasises that there are many various types of internal drivers for change within an organisation. These drivers are known as ‘change accelerators’ as stated by Jick (1995) while Porras and Hoffer (1996) define them as ‘action levers’. The importance of identifying internal drivers of change is emphasised by Steers and Black (1994) so an organisation will be equipped to cope with their change efforts. Haveman (1992) states that a need for change may be influenced from internal sources such as decreases in the professionalism in the organisation or direct influence coming from new managers. Other internal factors exist that can cause a need for change within an organisation. These including the implementation of new technology, a change in senior management, a morale decrease leading to dwindling performances and a lowering in profits.

#### **2.4.2 External Drivers**

When defining external drivers for change, Pendlebury et al., (1998) describes them as “factors arising outside the entity which is to be changed”. The greatest force for change according to Burns (1992) stems from rapid, significant changes in an organisations business environment. Burns further states that cyclical changes can include economic elements such as inflation or interest rates while fundamental changes can stem from growth rates and per capita income. Pendleburg et al., (1998) mentions that there is an ever increasing growth in innovation and from an organisations perspective, in order to survive and maintain competitiveness, they must change and alter their strategies. Dawson (1998) states that in the last number of years the demands being placed by consumers is becoming more sophisticated meaning organisations are being forced to change in order to keep up with these demands. Further to this belief, Lynch and Roche (2005) believe consumers are becoming increasingly concerned about environmental issues along with their own health leading to alterations in their own preferences and demands.

## **2.5 Models for Change**

As part of Burnes' (1992) research, he identifies the models for change developed by theorist Kurt Lewin which are categorised as:

### **2.5.1 Action Research Model**

This approach, as suggested by Lewin (1946), is comprised of three elements including the people, the change agents and the organisation itself. The model itself is designed on a process of steps which include planning, action and analysis.

### **2.5.2 The 3-Step Model**

This model predominantly proved that after the phase of introduction to the change, the original behaviour was more often than not reverted back to. Lewin (1946) asserts that for the successful implementation of a change process to occur this three step approach is more productive. These steps include, Unfreezing the organisation, moving to the desired position and subsequently refreezing the organisation once again.

### **2.5.3 The Phases of Planned Change Model**

This model involves a series of levels in which an organisation must progress through to allow for movement from the present unsatisfactory state to the future vision. Kotter (2007) states that for change to be successful and established as a norm a number of phases must be gone through. In his research he lists eight key stages for organisations to progress through in order to successfully implement their change initiative.

1. Establish a sense of urgency
2. Form a powerful guiding coalition
3. Create a vision
4. Communicate the vision
5. Remove barriers to change
6. Produce and celebrate short-term wins
7. Consolidate gains and produce more change
8. Anchor new approaches in the culture

In spite of the many imposing elements for change, most organisations are still reluctant to embrace change that is not seen as immediate. De Jager (1994) notes, despite the fact that change that contains structure and order can be easily managed, management generally view it as simply chaos and something that resists detailed definitions. De Jager later makes note

however that we react simply based on the perceptions we have on how it will affect our ability to cope. As De Jager (1994) mentions it is not just about what change will bring us, but how much it will cause us to lose. Goodstein and Warner Burke (1991), state that organisational change predominantly stems from external pressure rather than internal desires or needs. Therefore they claim that an efficient organisation is aware of initial signs of external transformations so as to make immediate changes to the internal system and allow the organisation to remain viable. Stevenson and Greenberg (1998) when describing organisational change at an impersonal level and how people perceive it as being “a process by which an organisational entity alters its form over time”, highlight the possible actors that may challenge establish frames of reference and cause uncertainty (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991). “The character of change may sit somewhere between these two extremes of planned or loose and open ended” (Smith, 2011). Dunphy and Stance (1990) for example argue for a contingency/situation analysis approach to change, one that focuses on the situational variables, both internal and external of an organisation either undergoing or needing to change.

## **2.6 Communicating Organisational Change**

Against a backdrop of increasing globalisation, deregulation, the rapid pace of technological innovation, a growing knowledge workforce and shifting social and demographic trends, few would dispute that the primary task for management today is the leadership of organisational change (Smith 2011, pp. 111-128). Pettigrew (1985) cited by Gilgeous (1997) states that organisational change transpires from business and economic events and also comes about from awareness of managers. Gilgeous (1997) further explains the importance for organisations to monitor the events around them and maintain constant awareness so that processes of change management to support and maintain a competitive advantage can be put in place quickly. Bartunek (1984) explains how an announcement about organisational change often challenges taken for granted meanings in the culture, leading to phases of meaninglessness. As a result stories will be exchanged to make new sense of the situation by organisational actors as stated by Reisner (2008). McConkie and Boss (1986) explain “these change stories will also reflect the needs and perceptions of individuals and groups in organisations and contested change stories will reflect fights for power, political games and unfair play, all of which may be used and possibly abused by those involved in the change process”.

The effective communication of change can be a critical factor in its designing and implementation, while according to Wrzesniewski (2003) the breakdown between some sectors of an organisation in the information could prove fatal for management. Larry Semeltzer (1991) highlighted the need for effective communication and proper collaboration in his study of 43 organisations. From his studies he identified the most common reason for failure in implementing a change process was the presence of negative or inaccurate rumours, which frequently stemmed from an inability by management to provide information to employees that was both accurate and timely. Hilner (1994) stated that the key perspective when changing companies is “consistency, persistence and repetitive communications”. Jerry Johnson (1993) spoke about full disclosure and honesty during change processes and the importance of both to limit fear held by employees about change. Hilner (1994) further believes that fearing change is simply human nature as we find comfort in old habits.

Cummings and Worley (2001) explain that members of organisations are generally reluctant to embrace change if compelling reasons to convince them otherwise are not present and that feelings of readiness for change only develop through the creation of a sense of necessity for change. McGuinness and Morgan (2005) go further to explaining that these compelling reasons for change must be widely communicated and done so in a convincing way to all organisational members. They further suggest that these organisational change capability components relate to three key facets of management; effective leadership, proper communication and change incentive systems. Proper communication involves a number of key principles to be upheld when translating organisational change.

## **2.7 Principles in Communicating Change**

Klein (1996) suggests a number of these that should be considered by management or change agents:

### **2.7.1 Redundancy of Message**

During instances in which communication from management is conducted by verbal means, Klein (1996) maintains that responsibility for interpreting the change information should not solely be the responsibility of the receiver but also of the sender. In this case he argues the quality of the initial sender should be examined and instances of poor quality communication should be identified. Effective communication, as Klien (1996) further explains relies on the receiver understanding the message as it was initially intended and an allowance for feedback enabled.



### **2.7.2 Face-to-Face Efficiency**

The use of this method as outlined by Klein (1996) ensures that messages are received immediately and allow for interaction between both parties ensuring understanding and clarification. This method further allows for an increasing belief and trust in management, a feature that Allen et al. (2007) outlines can lead to a tendency to accept the rationale for a change process.

### **2.7.3 Supervisor is Key Communicator**

The key link within the hierarchical structure comes from supervisors as Klein (1996) maintains, while employees have an expectation towards communication of changes coming from direct supervisors. According to Larkin and Larkin (1994) the first rule of communication within organisations is for management to communicate directly to supervisors. As they explain for employees the most credible source of information is from direct supervisors.

“The study of organisational change through stories is receiving much attention with particular interest in sensemaking under conditions of change” (Brown and Humphreys, 2003). Vuuren and Elving (2008) outline two particular contrasting methods to communicate change, formal and storytelling. Berger and Calabrese (1975) developed the Uncertainty Reduction Theory around the need for a reduction in uncertainty when it emerges among staff. In light of this Vuuren and Elving (2008) suggest line communication to permit formal information sharing as an effective tool with this difficulty as it allows for efficient feedback and employee suggestions. When looking to attach meaning to the change information being passed, Vuuren and Elving (2008) outline the storytelling method as a way to structure logic and order to sequences thus imposing a frame of events.

*Chapter Three:*

*Literature Review II*

## **Chapter Three**

### **Literature Review II**

#### **3.1 Employee Sensemaking**

Weick et al. (2005) describe the act of sensemaking in relation to organisation when stating “to make sense is to organise, and sensemaking refers to processes of organising using the technology of language to identify, regularise and routinise memories into plausible explanations”. Sensemaking as explained by Gioia (1986) is the process of using cognitive schemas to interpret our environment. Huy (1999) argued that receptivity to change is shaped by continuous sensemaking processes that are cognitive and emotionally based on both an attitudinal and an interpretive state. Weick (1995) developed the sensemaking approach as a means for an alternative to standard methods of looking at the process of organising, highlighting it as rather a set of ideas with organising possibilities. Weick further suggested that sensemaking provided a useful way of uncovering the social psychological processes that contribute to organisational outcomes, rather than focusing on the outcomes themselves.

Within organisations employees can develop different views of the change process and its repercussions to themselves and the organisation. As Helms, Thurlow and Mills (2010) explain, sensemaking in its most basic form is meant for understanding how these alternate meanings can be generated from the same event. As Stein (2004) states, during what can be known as “critical periods” in which disasters can unfold, sensemaking is utilised by both employees and management in order to come to terms with both the events that transpired and the steps that must now be taken. Similarly to this, Weick (2005) asserts that employees who experience disruptions in routines and behaviours are required to make sense of the new processes while considering the actions that must be taken as a result of these changes. Millar, Hind and Magala (2012) state that the best leaders will not only transform their own businesses but through their vision will alter attitudes and mindsets in their industry also.

#### **3.2 Properties of SenseMaking**

Helms Thurlow and Mills (2010) claim that employees undergoing changes in their environments create logic and sensemaking through the functioning of seven properties:

- I. **Grounded in Identity Construction:** The factors that were present in our past that shaped us have great influence in how we view our environment. The process of identity construction deals with individuals making sense of the sense-maker.
- II. **Retrospective:** we rely on experiences in the past to help us interpret current events meaning sensemaking is viewed as a comparative process. According to Brown and Jones (1998) sensemaking from a retrospective point of view can have significant impact during certain failures or organisational disasters.
- III. **Focused on and by extracted cues:** The process of sensemaking involves the focus of particular elements while ignoring others so as to allow us to interpret events. This process may also allow for individual employees or managers to interpret environmental cues that uphold their beliefs and allow them to stay on track with the change.
- IV. **Driven by plausibility rather than accuracy:** Meaning here is not driven by the accuracy of our own perceptions when we look to make sense of an event, but rather the plausibility of it. Employees will look indicators that will assist in creating more plausible sensemaking of events.
- V. **Enactive of the environment:** Sensemaking here is deemed to be shaped and influenced by the environment we find ourselves in meaning we can experience constraints or expands our sensemaking.
- VI. **Social:** Our interactions with colleagues and other members of our organisation are stated in this property to be contingent with our sensemaking. Further to this the presence within an organisation of rules, symbols and symbols will contribute to employee sensemaking and enable a guide for appropriate conduct.
- VII. **Ongoing:** the final aspect sees sensemaking as sequential in its process and never ceases as sensemaking in itself and its flow is constant.

### 3.3 Employee Interpretation of Change

According to Branson (2008) “the onus is on leaders to carefully nurture and skilfully manage the human resources within the organisation by focussing on such things as psychological commitment, communication, empowerment, teamwork, trust, participation and flexibility”. From an employee perspective, the language used by management can 'animate' change (Weick, 2011) or create confusion and opposition. Meaning is negotiated in organizational discourses where different and contested views of the need for changes are promoted, defended and criticized (Thomas et al., 2011). Further to this, Azad (2013) outlines

how psychologists with regard to change implementation have contributed towards the literature by suggesting that effective implementation of change requires that individuals be via communication or other managerial techniques motivated to accept and see the change as management sees it. Additionally he explains that it is not the change that people resist but the uncertainty that is entailed with the change and resolves that the symptoms that arise and bring about resistance must be analysed.

### **3.4 Sources of Resistance**

Insecurity may be one particular reason for resistance to arise according to Ansoff and McDonnell (1990) which may stem from management underestimating or failing to consider the impact of a particular change. Begley (1998) asserts that a key factor in the development of resistance is uncertainty within individuals and groups. This can occur due to employees experiencing doubt over their future position in the organisation along with possible changes in roles. A further reason as to why change is often resisted is down to a fear within employees of them failing to implement or follow the new changes (Nadler, 1982), while this can simply be down to fearing the unknown future that is placed in front of them. A lack of understanding can lead to high levels of barriers to communication between employees and their managers leading to misinterpretations in the information shared (Remult, 1998). Awareness from employees or lack of to the change efforts being introduced can be a substantial source of resistance. Pendleburg et al., (1998) states that a lack of awareness on the part of employees to the organisations problems is common thus leading to confusion over why the change efforts are necessary.

Demers et al. (1996, pp. 22) argues that “organisations tend to be very good at planning and orchestrating the technical and structural aspects of change, but poor at guiding and supporting the human side, the personal reorientation associated with change”. This has further effect to the commitment shown to management for organisational change processes. Jaros et al. (1993, pp. 989) notes that “for over two decades, researchers have persistently and gradually refined the meaning of organisational commitment”. Bennett and Durkin (2000) found that in examples of change where an organisations core values are affected, internalised commitment which is known to be one of the main constituents of employee commitment will suffer substantially. Organisational commitment has been proven to have positive effects on aspects such as job satisfaction (Bateman and Strasser, 1984) as well as job motivation (Mowday et al. 1979) while decreasing the levels of absenteeism and

employee turnover (Cotton and Tuttle, 1986). Mowday (1982) further found that employees who are highly committed to their organisation will aspire to stay employed and be motivated to help in achieving success for the organisation.

Kotter (1996) underlines the importance for organisations to alter structures or change systems that may cause an undermining of the change vision, while Cummings and Worley (2001) support the idea that within a change process a transition phase may require alternative structures and activities from management. Goehrig (2008) believes that for organisations to change the outcome for businesses will require alterations to current standing business structures and highlights the importance for executives and management to comprehend and implement new strategies.

Hultman (2006) outlines that resistance can come in two forms, active and passive. Active resistance takes the form of being critical, finding fault, ridiculing, appealing to fear, using facts selectively, blaming/accusing, sabotaging, intimidating/threatening, manipulating, blocking, undermining, starting rumours and arguing. Passive resistance includes conscious actions, such as agreeing verbally but not following through, failing to implement change, procrastinating, feigning ignorance, withholding information and standing by and doing nothing.

Another area of research conducted around resistance to organisational change was the influence associated with the relationships between employees and managers, as well as the styles managers employed. Oreg (2006) found that “a lack of trust in management was significantly associated with resistance to organizational change”, and Stanley *et al.* (2005) explored the relationship between trust in management and resistance to change from the concepts of scepticism and cynicism. Szabala (2007) found that “different perceived leadership strategies or styles influenced individuals’ reactions to change initiatives”, while Furst and Cable (2008) found that “the management tactics and their influence on resistance to change depended on the supervisor-employee relationship”. Bunchanan & Badham (2008) contend that management tend to ignore the multidimensional nature of resistance and view it as employees wilfully behaving badly. Leigh (1988) states that resistance is the rightful response from workers as they in the form of their behaviours or actions in the workplace in the process of change explain how poorly structured or irrational the change decision may be and indicate how it could be improved.

### **3.5 The common effects of resistance to change**

According to Brunton and Matheny (2009, pp. 600), “change is ubiquitous, a constant across public and private sector organisations”. Paton and McCalman (2000) propose that during the introduction stage to a new concept, process or innovation, that levels of resistance may become a factor from certain or many individuals for various reasons. There are many reasons for resistance to change from employees. Very often it is simply feelings of inertia towards changes in organisational design that may involve levels of retraining and redeployment or where the security of one’s employment may be put at risk (Paton and McCalman, 2000). Due to constant increases in uncertainty within the environment, the capacity to change for organisations is critical to survival (Kotter and Schlesinger, 1979). Resistance to change caused by employees can have significant impact on this capacity to change as supported by Cherim (2008). Resistance may be an individual response to change but is also shown by departments, divisions, unions, professional groups (Ashcraft, 2005; Brunton & Matheny, 2009; Real & Putnam, 2005), other sub-cultural groups (Harris & Ogbonna, 1998; Kan & Parry, 2004) and a variety of outside stakeholders (Chreim, 2007). Organizations themselves may resist change dictated by government (Binning, 2010) or by competitive and other external forces (Palmer, Dunford, & Akin, 2009).

Dent and Goldberg (1999, p. 37) observe, ‘the implicit assumption is that subordinate resistance is always inappropriate’. Some writers take a more enlightened approach that resistance may be constructive in that it signals problems about the change, reflects the engagement of others and may lead to more beneficial outcomes (e.g., Dent & Powley, 2003; Ford et al., 2008; Piderit, 2000). Azad (2013) notes that there are two aspects to resistance to change: it can be taken as a menace altogether and an enemy which is always harmful to the process of change and brings no good to the organisational performance and the other is the positive side of resistance. Resistance can be described as “an individual or group engaging in acts to block or disrupt an attempt to introduce change” (CIPD, 2010). Resistance can take two forms as described by Tiernan et al. (2006); overt resistance is utilised by the use of techniques such as strikes or drops in productivity as opposed to covert resistance which takes the form of excessive absenteeism, lack of motivation and increased errors. Schein (1988) casts an alternative viewpoint on this in rather than focusing a negative light upon the subject of resistance to change whereby always viewing it as the cause of the failure to manage change and overlooking its otherwise positive contributions. Resistance is a source of immense energy in the change process which provides insights as to the problems and their

causes that affect the change process. The requirement is to examine the situation closely to determine the causes of resistance and begin searching for alternative measures to implement the desired change, and then choose the options that otherwise do not cause the spur of resistance among the workforce (Eisen et al, 1992). Those leading and managing change are often unable to distinguish between opposition to a change initiative as a whole and resistant to only some aspects of it. Yet an employee may be supportive of some goals but not others, or supportive of a goal but not of the method of change (Holt et al., 2007).



*Chapter Four:*  
*Research Methodology*

## Chapter 4

### Research Methodology

#### 4.1 Introduction

The intention of this chapter is the outline details of the various theories and concepts that form the basis of the research methods employed by the researcher in this study. The research question that underlines this study will first be defined and followed by the overall research objectives. Finally the chapter will conclude by outlining the operational details along with examining the limitations behind the study.

Sekeran (1992) defined research as “*a systematic and organised effort to investigate a specific problem that needs a solution*”. Further to this, Cooper and Schindler (1998) assert that in order to provide data that is both reliable and suitable for use in management decision making, research must be carefully planned and conducted in a professional manner.

#### 4.2 Rationale to Research

A change in circumstances interrupts well-rehearsed patterns of action in a way that requires individuals, groups, or other social entities to re-enact their environments.

Similarly, in organizational change, a change in circumstances interrupts well-practiced patterns, because change, by definition, involves a movement in an organizational entity over time (Van de Ven and Poole, 1995). The process of such change and its impact on both employees and organisational performance is one that is often widely debated and the author is seeking to cast a clearer viewpoint on the real outcomes of this area. The subject of resistance to change is all too often focused on from the negative point of view as Dent and Goldberg (1999) observe saying, ‘the implicit assumption is that subordinate resistance is inappropriate’.

However the positives that can be derived from this resistance are the main focuses of this study and the insights that can be gained by management further to the causes that derail change efforts. Some writers take a more enlightened approach that resistance may be constructive in that it signals problems about the change, reflects the engagement of others and may lead to more beneficial outcomes (e.g., Dent & Powley, 2003; Ford et al., 2008;

Piderit, 2000). From an employee perspective, the language used by management can 'animate' change (Weick, 2011) or create confusion and opposition. According to Azad (2013) it is not the change that people resist to but the uncertainty that is entailed with the change and resolves that the symptoms that arise and bring about resistance must be analysed. Ultimately the goal of change is to ensure organisations remain viable, but as the author has discussed it is not a process achieved lightly. The following research will now look to further analyse the reasons for resistance and identifying the underlying beneficial impacts of such resistance to organisations and management.

### **4.3 Research Problem**

Scientific research starts from identifying a problem or a gap within existing literature. As Sekeran (1992) explains, it develops from the review of previous literature and a research question is then formulated along with specific objectives that show the reasoning and logic behind the research. Bryman (2007) states that “defining the problem bears critical importance for the whole research process”.

### **4.4 Primary Research Question**

Strauss and Corbin (1998) define a primary research question as the need to focus and develop practice based upon a definitive objective on which the researcher wishes to grow and resolve. Further to this, Ritchie and Lewis (2004) explain that it must first be determined by the researcher whether the research question is sufficiently clear and unambiguous as to how it corresponds and relates to the literature that previously exists.

Having examined the most relevant literature, the derived research question is as follows:  
*“What are the effects of employee resistance to the planning and design of organisational change?”*

### **4.5 Research Objectives**

Zikmund (2000) explains how research objectives provide clarity and the basis of the research being conducted in definitive standards and determinable expressions of the specific aims of the research. The overall objective of the research being carried out is to identify what positives can come from an organisational sense with their employees showing resistance to change measures that are being implemented. A number of research objectives were formed to show guidance as to the specific findings being sought which were outlined within chapter one. A study such as this one must contain objectives that are both clear and

concise in order to ensure focus and to give comprehensive indication on the information that is required.

## **4.6 Research Design**

The purpose of the research design is to provide an effective framework that will show the methods to be used in collecting and analysing the data. Saunders et al, (2007) states that the issue of time is a critical aspect in the development of any particular design. It is known as a 'blue print', according to Cooper and Schindler (1998) for the purpose of establishing answers to research questions and conclusively achieving objectives. Chisnall (2001) explain how a thoroughly planned research design will present clear direction during the research process. For the purposes of this study and the objectives outlined, a qualitative method is seen as the most beneficial approach to the collection of data. The reasoning behind this was the belief that information that is being sought will become more visible and easily obtained through the use semi-structured interviews. Also through the use of these interviews, the researcher will be more equipped to derive personal experiences and information from participants than with any other form of research. Saunders (2007) states that in relation to various methods of obtaining necessary data, the use of interviews contains the greatest likelihood of doing so through its personal contact and flexibility to change. The author further declares that the accessibility to appropriate sources has a substantial determining factor on the researcher's ability to collect the necessary data. The particular organisations were chosen due to pre-existing contacts the researcher had which allowed for necessary access to the appropriate interviewees. The chosen organisations also had undergone a significant change effort over the last number of years which was ultimately a determining factor due to the nature of the research.

## **4.7 Summary of Research Method**

The author's research will be collected from existing secondary data sources and the use of qualitative primary research to meet the specific research question and objectives. The researcher proposes to use a quantitative positivist research approach as it is often used when studying the interaction between humans and computers (Straub et al., 2004). Firstly the collected secondary data will be analysed, defined and analysed so as to uncover the areas where the secondary data is insufficient, thus establishing where primary research is necessary. The current literature largely focuses on the subjects of the implementation of change, the change process itself and the conductors of change. Further research will be

undertaken into the areas of resistance to change, the causes of it and the ultimate effects it has on the organisation and the change process. Finally during the secondary research collection stage the author will look at the broad area of sensemaking with employees and the perceptions they possess during the change process.

Secondly the author will conduct semi-structured interviews for his qualitative research in order to explore the research question and objectives. These interviews can be performed with a reasonably open framework which enables two-way communication that can be both focused and conversational. Questions will be prepared in advance of all interviews, however many can be created during the interview process making it adaptable to explore further details and issues that come up.

#### **4.8 Sources of Data**

Researchers can obtain necessary data for studies from two sources, primary and secondary (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010).

#### **4.9 Primary Research**

Primary research according to Malhorta (2009) is research which is created by the researcher in order to pose answers to his/her questions. It consists mainly of original data that can be sought to suit the purpose of the study (Shao, 1999). The process allows the researcher to collect the specific data required for the purpose of the research objectives. This is the main advantage of primary research as it addresses the issues specific to the research problem and is designed to collect the information that the researcher wants to know. Furthermore, the design of the research method is controlled by the author to focus on specific areas and the collection of information is monitored and controlled by the researcher also. Bailey et al., (1995) remarks, that the use of primary research often produces more accurate and reliable results than secondary. One major disadvantage of this style of research is the time and costs associated with collecting the research with this method (Malhorta and Birks, 1999).

#### **4.10 Secondary Research**

According to Aaker et al. (2001), secondary data is that which is collected for some purpose other than solving the problem at hand. It is data that exists due to a previous purpose for it by researchers who sought answers for other research questions. In line with this Remeyni et al., (1998) describes this mode of research as data that is currently available either directly or indirectly.

The main advantages of undertaking secondary research are the constant availability of vast amounts of research along with the short lengths of time required for conducting this method. Emory and Cooper (1991) explain that secondary research can provide a clearer outline of the study context while also verifying if further research in a certain area is necessary. One of the main limitations of secondary research is highlighted also by Aaker et al. (2001) as the rate of which this data can go out of date which can significantly impacts this study as it will focus more towards the impacts of change from the recent economic downturn. An important note is that the use of secondary research can often fail to provide the necessary information required by the researcher. Researchers who endeavour to utilise this method of data collection must maintain a critical and reflective approach.

This mode of data collection was used at length throughout this study in achieving the research objectives, primarily during the initial design stages. The data was collected from various articles and journals within the library and databases of Waterford Institute of Technology.

#### **4.11 Qualitative Research versus Quantitative Research**

According to Becker (1986), Qualitative research differs from Quantitative in five significant ways:

1. Its use of positivism and post-positivism
2. Acceptance of postmodern studies
3. Capturing an individual's point of view
4. Examining the constraints of everyday life
5. Securing rich descriptions

“Qualitative research implies an inherent emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity or frequency” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, pp. 8). Researchers who use qualitative methods stress the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied. Quantitative research on the other hand relies on precise structure in order to generate the necessary numeric results. Quantitative research further emphasises the measurement and analysis of casual relationships between variables rather than processes.

#### **4.12 Qualitative Research**

Burns and Bush (2000) define qualitative research as “research involving observing and/or asking open ended questions, usually in a small number of informants”. As described by Baker (2003) qualitative research is subjective and non-rigorous as well as flexible and exploratory. It can also be seen to be quite subjective and difficult to replicate (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Regardless of this drawback the author has chosen that for the purpose of this research question and the objectives that the use of qualitative methods is most appropriate. According to Malhorta and Birks (1999), qualitative research captures hidden feelings, creates a complex occurrence and obtains a holistic out look to gain a bigger picture. Due to the nature of the research question and the need for in-depth interviews it was strongly felt that qualitative research would help to gain a detailed description of employee emotions towards change circumstances and causes of resistance. Most importantly the use of qualitative research will aid in the further research needed within the area of employee sensemaking which is becoming a more and more relevant topic.

#### **4.13 Semi-Structured Interviews**

Carruthers (1990) believes that researchers will encounter a “deeper understanding of the data and intense satisfaction with results” when using the semi-structured interview process. The technique allows interviewers to build connection with the interviewee which in turn results in increased interaction and further data collection from the interview itself. There are a number of disadvantages although to conducting interviews that researchers must be aware of. According to Hoyle, Harris and Judd (2002) some of these include the amount of time needed to conduct such interviews and most importantly a sense of bias can be brought by the interviewee.

#### **4.14 Limitations of the study**

The researcher while conducting research on the particular subject area encountered a number of limitations. These were due to circumstances surrounding the author and the study methods themselves. The most apparent limitation present is the lack of experience and expertise on the part of the author in completing these forms of academic tasks. The conducting of interviews itself will be a further challenge for the author as this task was previously unrequired of him. As a result this may limit the depth of findings ascertained within the first number of interviews and a loss is potentially valuable information.

The use of qualitative research methods bring with it additional constraints. These include the time which is necessary both to collect and process this type of data which will impact on the amount of primary data conducted. Further to this the financial, time and logistical constraints that will exist in conducting this research limiting the author to a lower number of interviews.

Third and finally, with the prospect of requiring questions that may be of a sensitive nature to be asked, gaining access to the relevant people required for the completion of this study may prove difficult. While also the willingness of subjects to divulge such sensitive information may also prove to be difficult with some participants showing bias towards their company in their answers.

#### **4.15 Research Ethics**

Cooper and Schindler (1998) explain the interview participant at any time has the right to maintain his/her anonymity throughout the research process. Oliver (2003) claims a strong basis of research ethics is the allowance for Employees identities to remain hidden in any report. This anonymity that should be allowed offers advantages to the researcher in that it provides greater opportunity for deeper investigations into areas deemed to be sensitive in nature. Interviewees may also be more comfortable with providing information under the condition of anonymity as they feel a greater sense of freedom.

Before conducting any interview, it was stated clearly that each participant would have the right to confidentiality surrounding their identity. Each interview participant chose to have their personal details hidden for the purposes of the study and the researcher gladly obliged.

#### **4.16 Validity and Reliability**

In relation to validity and reliability, Patton (2002) proclaims that when a qualitative study is being designed, examined or its findings evaluated by the researcher, ensuring these are held is essential. Miles and Huberman (1994) mention that ‘natural validity’ are uncontrolled events that are simply examined but not influenced by the researcher. Groves et al, (2004) define reliability as “the measurement of variability of answers over repeated conceptual trials”.

In an effort to ensure the reliability of the data collected, the author recorded each semi-structured interview with the permission of the participants and transcribed them so as also to ensure evidence was kept of this primary research. Further to this in an attempt to achieve a



high degree of validity, the researcher ensured that each of the interview participants were provided with a transcribed record of the interview for the purpose of verifying any issues left outstanding.

#### **4.17 Conclusion**

The research methods that have been employed for this study in conducting the necessary primary and secondary research have been outlined in this study. The chapter firstly set out the rationale and research design for the study along with the modes of data collection employed for this study. As this chapter looked to outline the methods of research collection, the following chapter will now present the main research findings while giving an analysis of the data gathered through the process.

*Chapter Five:*  
*Research Findings*

## **Chapter 5**

### **Research Findings**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter will be to present the findings of the data collected as a result of the primary research conducted by the author. The findings have been presented predominantly in the structure surrounding the themes evident within the literature review with further reference to the specific research objectives outlined.

Due to the sensitive nature of the data collected from the semi-structured interviews due regard to confidentiality has been taken thus meaning the names of each interviewee and their company have been concealed. The subject companies are aware of both their right and necessity to protect sensitive information and intellectual property and as such, certain information obtained from the interviews and relevant to the findings outlined have been omitted.

#### **5.2 Profile of the Interviewees**

Semi-structured interviews formed the basis for investigating the issues of change management, resistance to change and the resulting outcomes from resistance. The participants of the interviews were four long-term ground level employees' who occupied varying roles within four separate companies. This spread of participants across separate companies and job roles has helped in illustrating a more balanced opinion of both the causes of resistance within organisations and its effect on change management.

Each interview Employee has had their names removed for the sake of confidentiality and will be referred to as Employee A, B, C and D in line with their company name (e.g. Employee A from Company A).

#### **5.3 Company Profiles**

The conducting of primary research was done in a number of different Irish indigenous companies as well as international brands. These companies were selected for a number of reasons; firstly they were forced into initiating major structural and organisational changes due to the economic downturn in order to remain viable entities. The chosen companies also

had a long history of trade within their industry thus meaning their old habits and practices had been built up but most importantly a sense of culture existed that made it increasingly difficult to implement changes into such a long standing environment.

Company A is a Soft Drinks and Beverage Distribution wholesaler who has been based in Ireland since 1960 and sells throughout Ireland and the UK. The company produces a number of nationally recognisable brands and through acquisitions of other Irish companies became one of the leading businesses in this industry, employing over 650 people nationwide. Over 60% of these employees have over 15 years of service given to the company which is a fact they pride themselves on claiming high levels of local and industry knowledge. In 2012 the company was acquired by a much larger UK based International brand for €12.4 million and immediately looked to make changes within the Company A structure and work practices to resemble their own.

Company B is an award winning and international soft drinks manufacturer and distributor who has been present in the Irish market since 1952 and currently employs 1,900 people in 10 different facilities between the Republic and Northern Ireland. The company has prided itself on its continued investment in both new products and technology allowing it to continuously adapt to the ever changing environmental landscape. Another source of great pride for the company is their employee talent pool and the knowledge their workers give to the company. Their readiness to change is aided by their bottom up approach to it which was highlighted throughout the interviews.

Company C is a major Irish food wholesaler that operates under 8 different store brands both nationwide and internationally. Starting as a single grocery store in the 1870's it has expanded both organically and through acquisitions to being one of the leading food wholesalers in Ireland and the UK with total revenues just under €5 billion. Through each acquisition the company has made along with each economic downturn or change to the environmental landscape it has worked to constantly maintain its own tradition and values. This achievement has been attributed to careful planning and strategising on behalf of management and group directors along with the participation and involvement of its ground level staff.

Company D is a waste and recycling business that was founded in the early 1990's operating throughout Munster and southern Connaught. By 2005 it became one of the largest waste disposal companies in Ireland with over 50,000 customers and employing over 350 staff.

Since the economic downturn however it has struggled with high levels of debt and as a result was sold by receivers to a conglomerate who since then have looked to bring the company back profitability. However due to a number of factors identified through research and interviews carried out it is clear that the strategies put in place to save the company have so far failed as they now face even further financial uncertainty.

## **5.4 Study Findings**

The following section will present the main findings of the research carried out from employees of each company. They will be structured mostly and presented in correlation to the literature presented in chapters 2 & 3, along with the main research objectives outlined in chapter 1. They will focus firstly on the varying needs for change within each of the organisations along with the main drivers of this change within their industry. Following this an analysis will be given to the planning and implementation strategies put in place by the companies. Finally the effectiveness of these strategies will be shown along with the varying degrees of resistance to the change processes and how this affected the end results.

### **5.4.1. Findings for Objective 1: The rationale behind change and its management from planning to implementation.**

For this objective each of the Employees were asked their opinions on why the proposed change initiative was brought about and if they believed it was truly necessary and of benefit to the organisation as a whole. Each of the Employees cited the economic downturn in 2008/2009 as the main contributing factor for this from an external point of view. Employee B stated that she could see the need for increasing efficiency levels as competition was increasing in their industry due to the recession. Employee A mentioned that as a result of the recession larger companies with greater purchasing power would become more prominent now as they could absorb the financial losses more than their company. In contrast to these views, Employee C stated that their company saw only increased opportunities as a result of the economic downturn which led to them making changes to their structure and practices in an attempt to exploit more markets.

In terms of scale each Employee stated that from the outset the size of the change initiative being planned seemed substantial and quite intimidating to both themselves and their colleagues. Employee D mentioned that upon hearing the news of redundancies and new structural changes a lot of work was done to communicate their feelings and opinions to the proposed strategies which he felt fell on deaf ears. This was mainly due to the fact he stated, that as the company was experiencing severe financial difficulties plans had to be put in place

and implemented quickly without effective consultation with all stakeholders taking place. Employee A stated that while the plan put in place to change the processes of the Irish organisation to resemble their new UK parent company was over a somewhat long period of time, there was again very little consultation and involvement with the workers of Company A. This as he further mentioned caused grievances among employees as they were being asked to change routines and habits that had been practiced by them for years without allowing them to give their input on how trade was conducted locally.

When queried on the issue of the benefit of the changes employees understood it would bring about, only Employee B stated they could clearly see the necessity and positives of going through the change ordeal. She outlined the increased efficiencies that bringing in the newly proposed operations management software, SAP, would provide the company. However she also mentioned that from the beginning phases it was communicated to employees that the introduction of this new software would take between four to six months. In reality it turned out to be a process that took up to fourteen months to become operational. Each of the remaining three Employees stated that there was little or no communication with them on the benefits the proposed changes would bring. However, Employees A and D made it clear that both they and their colleagues were well aware of the difficulties facing the organisation and the need for radical changes. They went on to explain that this caused greater frustration amongst groups of employees as each person had opinions on how to help their struggling companies but were for the most part ignored.

#### **5.4.2. Findings for Objective 2: What levels of co-operation existed between management and employees during planning and implementation?**

The primary research findings found that two of the four employees interviewed could say that management within their organisation worked to communicate the necessity for the change and the benefits it would bring to the company. Employee B stated that she and her colleagues were well informed of the upcoming plans and most importantly, what was expected of them. Employee C however remarked that while efforts were made by management to communicate the proposed initiatives, the messages were sometimes “unclear and unambiguous”. Both other Employees stated a clear lack of communication from management as regards the new processes and structural changes being introduced and were left to form ideas based on rumours and stories from external sources. This lead to both these Employees further pointing out that as they were the people who would be affected by the

changes and would for the most part implement them it was “ridiculous and almost absurd behaviour”, as quoted by Employee D. Employee C similarly remarked that as it would be him and his colleagues that would see their job roles and environments changed the most, they were “left somewhat out of the loop” as to the exact details which he felt was quite unfortunate for the planning.

When asked how management planned to introduce the new initiatives, be it step-by-step or radical approach, each interviewee had varying remarks. Employee A highlighted the fact that as they were in an increasingly competitive market the acquisition and changes to production and distribution practices needed to be brought about quickly to alleviate further financial losses. This meant complete and immediate changes brought in that put great amounts of pressure on employees. Employees B and C explained that while they were both involved in two competitive industries facing difficulties with the economic downturn, each company felt they could withstand the pressure due to their size and thus allow themselves the chance to introduce a more step-by-step transformation.

Employee D stated the acquisition and restructuring of the organisation was started before proper communication of the plans was given to employees and also before any form of consultation could take place. He further mentioned that there was no attempt to gauge the response to, or acceptance of the change from employees before plans were implemented. Employee A expressed that it was only as plans were well under way that management attempted to gauge responses from employees towards the new practices. This he felt was due only to the fact that initial signs of resistance were beginning to emerge within the organisation. Employee B felt there was a level of consultation conducted by management with employees to achieve their input and understanding. Despite this she later highlighted that this was widely felt by employees to only be a way of smoothing out the introduction period of the new SAP software.

#### **5.4.3. Findings for Objective 3: Levels of resistance that were evident and why it formed in the organisation?**

When asked to comment on their opinions of what can influence employee commitment to a new change initiative, each employee gave quite similar responses based upon their own experiences. Employees A and D stated clearly that what they wanted to see management do from the beginning was engage in clear communication with all the stakeholders involved and allow employees the possibility to have their opinions heard and considered. Employee B mentioned she and her colleagues recommended to supervisors that a number of employees

be allowed to join the tactical planning groups regularly and give their feedback on all proposals made and be a part of the designing phase. During her response she stated, “shared responsibility drives cooperation, which fuels commitment”. This statement she believed highlights the feelings shared by all her colleagues on how to gain the trust and support of people when pushing through plans.

Employee A described incidents in which employees within the organisation struggled to enact the practices and routines imposed by the new management. He explained how difficult some employees found changing from old behaviours that had lasted them over a decade and were now being forced into learning completely new routines. Employee B similarly stated that she witnessed plenty of evidence of employee difficulty with the new tasks and systems they were working with.

During each interview the question of changes in organisational culture by way of routines, habits and norms was highlighted by each employee. Employee A quoted “when practices work, you make them a routine, and that’s what we did for years”. These routines were suddenly changed and ultimately employees felt uncomfortable and insecure in their job roles and as a result the entire working environment became unstable. Employee B and C stated that their changes were not having a direct effect on their job roles or daily tasks, but rather with the people they were now working with. Employee B stated that with the introduction of the new SAP software, management immediately reposted some employees into new positions anticipating less of a need for them in their current offices. This as she explained changed the norms around her office and the teams people were used to working with. Again this was similar to the response of Employee D who explained how the regular faces he had seen for over ten to fifteen years were now no longer present which gave rise to completely new daily habits, norms and routines.

On the issue of resistance and its presence within the organisation at stages, Employees A and D stated it became evident almost immediately due to the changes being introduced. Employee A believes it was solely down to the lack of consultation and communication with employees and instead imposing changes in their work practices and norms. Employee D remarked that employees were given no input or even information of what plans were being put forward and instead left waiting for the new initiatives to be put in place. Employee D further added, “these acts of resistance were in no way an effort to derail attempts to make the company profitable again”. He explained that employees simply wanted to be included in



planning the future of the company that they had been a part of for so long. Similarly Employee A mentioned how groups of employees began work to rule practices in order to gain the attention of management and allow them the opportunity to highlight the issues they had with the new processes being implemented. Employee B stated that there were levels of resistance stemming from a number of groups over the new system introduction that at first seemed insignificant to management. Over time this grew as many people's job roles began to change and concerns were being raised about the overconfidence management had on the new system and a lack of cover being left available should issues emerge with it. On a number of occasions, as she pointed out, the SAP software proved to cause problems and as a result work was delayed and productivity decreased due to shortage of staff numbers. Efforts were being made to show management that the new software could not allow for a decrease in staff in all areas of the organisation but due to a lack of consultation and involvement this was not identified before problems arose. Employee C remarked that when employees were left to implement the new routines and behaviours, some went back into old habits as they were not properly informed as to why it was important for them to alter practices. This he stated was "not a form of resistance but unintentional behaviour as it was imbedded into their mindset to do tasks in a way they felt was right for customers".

In relation to the issue of dealing with resistance or problems with implementing the change, each Employee, apart from Employee D stated that management looked to consult with staff and look at ways of improving any inefficiency or other problems with the new process. Employee B explained how their management set-up a group which would include members from the affected employees to review the new system software and the tactical plans around moving workers into different job roles. Employee A mentioned that management engaged in a similar process of consultation with staff and inclusion in future plans. Employee D however explained that their company's new owners were not receptive to the growing levels of resistance and anger towards the changes. He stated that "if we were to come forward and list our issues with the changes we would receive only a behavioural warning in return".

#### **5.4.4. Findings for Objective 4: What impact did resistance have to the new process and its end result?**

Each of the employees up to this point stated similar arguments that resistance within their organisation was not brought upon intentionally or with a desire to cause financial difficulties to the organisation. Rather it was a natural response to management attempting to implement new processes and changes that proved to go against their unconscious habits, routines and

norms. Further to this in most cases it was proving to have detrimental impacts on their day to day productivity levels and individual performances.

Employee B stated that her and her colleagues were not looking to have management scrap the new SAP system proposal, but rather reassess the plans they had built around it and allow for staff consultation. Employee A and his co-workers wish to see a consideration for their knowledge of the local trade within their industry and encompass them within their plans for new practices. Employee D however stated a specific resentment from employees towards management over the changes that were taking place. As he explained, “the resistance almost divided the workers themselves, from the people passively resisting to those purposefully doing so”.

The primary research has shown different reactions to the change processes and varying levels of resistance to them. Employees A, B and C all showed clearly that they were resisting with the attempt to cause a change in management plans and become more aware of their employees opinions and views. Employee B stated she witnessed firsthand the new measures management put in place to effectively plan and strategise for the implementation of the SAP software. She mentioned that she fully believes the subtle resistance shown to management about their original planning caused a rethink and eventually improved the outcomes. Employee C declared that workers in their organisation unintentionally resisted the changes introduced by management by reverting back to old behaviours and as a result they were retrained and shown effectively the purpose of these new work habits and practices. Employee A noted, “management turned around and looked to be advised by us first before they redrew plans for new work practices”. This he stated was a result of the resistance shown by his colleagues over changes to their work routines that had served them for over a decade. Employee D remarked that due to the sometimes aggressive resistance being shown towards management over structural changes, poor employee-management relationships developed which caused difficulties for revising plans. The outcome as he explained was changes were very slowly implemented with some compromises being made by management which allowed for the new initiatives to be pushed through. In his opinion however the resistance proved to have two outcomes, “management knew they needed to make changes which they did, but it also destroyed the relationship we would have with the new owners”.

Employee A agreed that there can be significant benefits to resisting change to a certain level and only when it is truly necessary. Employee B maintained that without showing resistance

to the new plans management would never have become aware of the flaws, or at least not until it became too late to make amendments. Employee C stated that even their unconscious resistance to alterations in the work practices caused management to revisit the issue and employ new, more efficient training and communication plans. Employee D however felt that resistance to change is a very difficult topic to deal with as it can become uncontrollable very quickly. Employee D finished by stating, “it can cause just as much problems for an organisation as solutions”.

## **5.5 Chapter Summary**

In this chapter the primary research findings have been presented by the author which were sourced from the semi-structured interviews carried out with four different employees. From the interviews the author has identified the drivers for change within each organisation, the types of change introduced by management, their strategy for implementing it and the resulting responses from employees as a result. The resistance that stemmed within each organisation has been identified along with the reasons behind it. Lastly the author has presented the main findings as to the affects this resistance had on the design of strategies and the implementation of plans.

*Chapter Six:*

*Discussion*

## Chapter 6

### Discussion

#### 6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the primary research findings and discuss the discoveries relevant to the secondary research conducted and included in the Literature Review. The author will aim to investigate whether the findings presented in the previous chapter have a degree of congruence with the secondary research. This chapter will be presented as an overview of the research objectives and what was discovered in relation specifically to them. The discussion will relate only to the material that is directly included in both the Literature Review and the Research Findings.

*“Every type of modern organisation has little choice but to adapt to the relentless pace of change or it faces the risk of failure”, Jamali et al. (2006).*

The key findings from the primary research have shown that organisations since the economic downturn have looked to make rapid changes to their structure in an attempt to either remain competitive or take advantage of increased opportunities. A significant finding has been the failure of management to consult with employees in the planning stages and instead attempt to push through new initiatives without gaining an effective understanding of what is needed. This as we have previously seen has brought about numerous examples of employee resistance and as a result hindered the change process.

#### 6.2. Drivers for Change

The initial findings to be discussed are the reasons behind each of the change initiatives and the necessity for them. These will include the main drivers for change as presented in the Literature Review that correlate with the findings sourced from the primary research. When examining needs for change within an organisation, Rollinson et al., (1998) emphasises that there are many various types of internal drivers for change within an organisation. When defining external drivers for change, Pendlebury et al., (1998) describes them as “factors arising outside the entity which is to be changed”.

### **6.3. Internal Drivers**

In the literature, Haveman (1992), states that a need for change may be influenced from internal sources such as decreases in the professionalism in the organisation or direct influence coming from new managers. Employees identified two drivers for change within their own organisations, a desire to improve operations internally in Company B and the objective to adopt the practices of the UK parent with Company A. Employees A and D further cited the influences brought upon by new management in the organisation and their desire to input the images they had for the company's future. Both these employees also noted an obvious for change within their organisation as profits began decreasing as a result of both the economic downturn and inefficiencies within the company. The literature identified the implementation of new technology as a factor in determining the need for change. Employee B spoke about the ambition to improve operating systems within the company and ultimately increase levels of efficiency from staff and daily operations. The SAP software was the latest technology in this area that would provide the change needed for the organisation. Employee C also acknowledged the impact new technology was having on their industry as opportunities for expansion were arising due to new advances. This as he stated was a main driver for his company adopting new practices and job roles.

### **6.4. Rationale for Change**

Beer and Nohria (2000) state that "most traditional organisations have accepted, in theory at least, that they must either change or die", while Ragsdell (2000) notes that the main function of an organisational change initiative is to reposition an organisation to a state that is viewed as being more progressive and favourable to its long term strategy. However the views of management's strategic outlook may differ from an employee. The primary research identified that only Company B had effectively communicated the need for this change and the benefits it would bring. For Employee B it was felt among many that the time span of the implementation was underestimated in order to ensure acceptance and compliance among members of the organisation. Employees C discussed the fact that while efforts to communicate the vision were made they were often unclear and left open to misinterpretation. The remaining two companies were shown to poorly communicate the necessity of the proposed changes, the stages of implementation and the benefits of introducing the new process. According to Wrzesniewski (2003) the breakdown between some sectors of an organisation in the information could prove fatal for management. Employee A explained the levels of frustration that existed between employees and

management due to their lack of clear communication towards the change and the reasons for introducing it. Hilner (1994) stated that the key perspective when changing companies is “consistency, persistence and repetitive communications”. Jerry Johnson (1993) spoke about full disclosure and honesty during change processes and the importance of both to limit fear held by employees about change.

From the analysis of both the primary and secondary research we can see the highlighted difficulties organisations face when exposed to the subject of organisational change. Responsibility with management does not end with simply identifying a need for change and acting on it, but also communicating a vision clearly to all involved so as to ensure both acceptance and smooth implementation.

### **6.5. Employee/Management Co-operation**

Kotter (2007) states that a successful transformation requires teamwork due to organisations underestimating the challenges in implementing change. With this view in mind it is clear that there must be levels of co-operation between both employees and management when designing strategies and plans for implementation. Employee B gave the only example of management consultation with employees in achieving input towards the new process introduction. However as she later stated it was widely felt that this measure by management was simply to gain higher cooperation and trust. Todd (1999) views change as “a structured and systematic approach to achieving a sustainable change in human behaviour within an organisation”. As most change initiatives identified by the primary research have appeared as alterations to practices and human behaviours, the entire concept of change should be seen a cooperative based operation that encourages input from all stakeholders. As expressed by most of the employees however this was not evident. Employee A expressed that only when plans were in operation did management attempt to seek responses and views from employees being affected by the change. In a more significant scenario, Employee D described how acquisition and restructuring plans were being implemented before direct messages were given to employees. From these examples it is clear how levels of resistance to these changes emerged within the organisations. In Kotter’s research he outlines eight key steps to be undertaken to successfully implement change. Creating visions, communicating and removing barriers are significant aspects to successful adoption of change which were not evident from the primary research.

In relation to the management of change, Recklies (2001) argues those aspects such as planning, initiating, realising and controlling as well as the need for an affective stabilisation is required from both a corporate and a personal level. Employee A suggested that the new management designing changes for their organisation could not factor into their plans elements of local behaviour within their industry. At a corporate level these issues were not seen to be evident, however when plans were introduced and implemented, the human and personal behaviours that existed in the industry for decades prevented a smooth transitioning. Kotter and Schlesinger developed the method of participation and involvement as a way to ensure both compliance from employees and the effective design of plans. The underlying reasoning behind the failure from Company B to smoothly adopt the new operations software was due significantly to management's failure to understand the human elements of the change. Levels of participation and involvement between both employees and management would have identified the flaws with initial planning design and alleviated shortcomings before problems would have arisen.

Cummings and Worley (2001) explain that members of organisations are generally reluctant to embrace change if compelling reasons to convince them otherwise are not present. In the case of Company C and their policy changes with staff practices and behaviours, there was an unconscious reluctance to adopt the new changes as they were left unaware of the need for them. Company D through their lack of communication and involvement gave employees only compelling reasons to reject the changes being made and instead form significant levels of resistance.

The primary research conducted by the author has provided evidence that there were relatively low levels of co-operation and involvement between management in the design and planning stages which lead to creating added difficulties in the introduction stage. As the literature identified, engaging in the practice of joint participation when designing change initiatives is not just beneficial, but essential to organisations.

## **6.6. Effectiveness of Strategies**

Lewin (1946) developed varying models for implementing change effectively in organisations. His Action Research Model comprised of including people within the wider organisation in the planning, action and analysis of new initiatives to bring about successful change. The implementation strategy employed by Company A failed to include the individuals who would become most affected by the change, as well as having the greatest



input to offer. This as we can see from the primary research resulted in substantial difficulties for management in implementing the changes. As highlighted in the Literature, phases for planned change must be gone through in order smoothly alter from the present unsatisfactory state to the future vision. Key stages in the process will include the creation of a clear vision and goals, subsequently management must then communicate this vision effectively in an attempt to remove opposition and barriers to the change. The strategy implemented by Company C, as identified through the primary research, failed implement these key steps when they inefficiently communicated the necessity for the changes in routines and practices and the ultimate vision of this also. Employee C explained how this factor lead to the unintentional resistance to the changes brought about by management and ultimately a change in the plans by management.

Dunphy and Stance (1990) argue for a contingency/situation analysis approach to change, one that focuses on the situational variables, both internal and external of an organisation either undergoing or needing to change. For Company B a divergence to this style could have alleviated the issues of staff shortages and system failures by allowing designs to be more open and easily altered. Smith (2011) stated, “the character of change may sit somewhere between these two extremes of planned or loose and open ended”. The issues as outlined by Employee B may have been aided by a more inclusive planned approach from the beginning while allowing for an open view of the end result. Similarly with Company A, the outlook of management from the beginning of imposing a mirror image of practices from their UK base operations became too closed a strategy as identified by Employee A. Planning with the involvement of employees may have given more input and allowed for a smoother introduction while promoting an openness to change could allow for further support and tolerance from staff.

## **6.7. Sources of Resistance**

Begley (1998) asserts that a key factor in the development of resistance is uncertainty within individuals and groups. As he further outlines, this can occur due to employees experiencing doubt over their future position in the organisation along with possible changes in roles. Each employee made reference to the size of the changes that were being initiated within their organisation. As a result workers were left unsure of the eventual outcomes to both their job roles and their future within the company. Employees A and D specifically stated they were aware of the substantial need for change but as little communication was given on the plans

put in place, fear grew among workers. As Nadler (1982) highlights, fear can often be a reason for resistance and failing to implement or follow new processes. A lack of understanding can lead to high levels of barriers to communication between employees and their managers leading to misinterpretations in the information shared (Remult, 1998). Employee D stated that members of the organisation were left to form opinions based on rumours and stories rather than effective communication from management. This led then to an inaccurate basis of information which caused increased worry, insecurity and ultimately resistance from employees.

Demers et al. (1996, pp. 22) argues that “organisations tend to be very good at planning and orchestrating the technical and structural aspects of change, but poor at guiding and supporting the human side, the personal reorientation associated with change”. As we can see from the primary research effective planning was not enacted by management as they failed to adhere to the human element of organisations or engage in efficient consultation with employees to ensure resistance did not stem from individuals and groups.

### **6.8. Impact of Resistance**

Dent and Goldberg (1999, p. 37) observe, ‘the implicit assumption is that subordinate resistance is always inappropriate’. Some writers take a more enlightened approach that resistance may be constructive in that it signals problems about the change, reflects the engagement of others and may lead to more beneficial outcomes (e.g., Dent & Powley, 2003). The primary research findings indicated that each of the employees and their colleagues showed no particular desire to intentionally act as resisters to the change. This behaviour was brought upon as they explained due to a natural response to what they saw as poor and inefficient planning on the part of management. As Eisen (1992) highlights from the literature, resistance is a source of immense energy in the change process which provides insights as to the problems and their causes that affect the change process. Employee B noted that their intention was not simply the removal of the new software, but more an attempt for them to help with the design of it to allow for a more efficient introduction. Employee A spoke about the knowledge and experience he and his colleagues had to offer and that their resistance was only an effort to show management their flaws and allow more participation and involvement.

“An employee may be supportive of some goals but not others, or supportive of a goal but not of the method of change” (Holt et al., 2007). This statement is typical throughout each of the

organisations included in the primary research. Each employee had awareness of the issues facing the organisation and realised the need for change. The goals set out by management were not the reasons for resistance stemming within their organisations, but more the methods they utilised in planning, communicating and implementing the change. The resistance as was shown was brought about only as a desire to revisit plans and design more effective strategies.

## **6.9. Chapter Summary**

The author in this chapter has looked to discuss the main primary research findings in conjunction with the secondary academic literature collected around the topic. The next chapter will present the conclusion of the dissertation and look to present recommendations for further research in this area.

*Chapter Seven:*

*Conclusion*

## **Chapter 7**

### **Conclusion**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to act as a summary for the study thus far while also presenting conclusions that have been developed from the literature review and the primary research findings. Further to this, the author will review the limitations that became evident with this study and finally provide recommendations on discoveries made while analysing both the primary and secondary findings for future providing recommendations for further research on the subject.

#### **7.2 Literature Review Conclusions**

The literature collected as part of the secondary research has been divided into two separate chapters for the purpose of identifying first the causes for change within organisations and the strategies management use for implementing such new initiatives. Secondly, the literature then focuses on the difficulties many organisations face when implementing change, the resistance that can emerge and the eventual impact on the new processes.

The first chapter focuses on the undeniable need for change for companies who look to remain competitive in today's turbulent business environment. Be it initiatives that focus on restructuring, downsizing or reorganising, change is a common focus of management and the willingness and ability of an organisation to identify the need for and impose change can be the most prominent aspect attributed to the either the successful adaptation to change or the ultimate failure of new system introductions. Learning how to impose change therefore has become a vital skill for managers in fast moving environments along with gaining the support of employees to ensure compliance and smooth implementation. The literature within chapter one also focuses on the specific drivers for change that exist both internally and externally in industries that can affect a company's success and force them to become more adaptable. The main factors indentified stemming the need for change externally include economic austerity, growth in innovation and technology along with other environmental factors. Internal 'change accelerators' include influence from new management along with decreases in productivity due to system or behavioural issues.

The first literature chapter focuses finally on the communication of change throughout an organisation and the importance of spreading awareness of the change quickly and effectively. Inefficient communication as the literature highlights can allow rumours and stories of the change event to spread thus allowing an inaccurate picture to be created. An organisation must focus on delivering consistent, persistent and repetitive communications while ensuring policies of full disclosure and honesty are maintained.

Chapter two of the literature review introduces the concept of Employee Sensemaking within organisations and its use for organising memories to create plausible explanations of events. As the literature explains the concept of Sensemaking allows for an increasing ability to uncover social processes contributing to organisational outcomes. As the literature explains, employees can develop varying views of the change process and the repercussions the eventual change will bring. Sensemaking allows for an understanding of how these alternate views can be developed from one event and help to alleviate fear and growing uncertainty during 'critical periods'. Sensemaking as the literature also shows can allow employees to understand more thoroughly the new processes and routines they are being subjected to. The secondary research explains how great leaders, through their own vision can influence mindsets during the transformation of their organisation to ensure success in their industry.

Chapter two of the Literature Review continues by identifying and interpreting the reasons for resistance within organisations. It highlights certain factors such as fear and uncertainty as main sources which can stem from ineffective communication as was highlighted in chapter one of the literature. The literature goes further into finding that organisations are able to efficiently plan and design structural aspects of change but fail to consider and nurture the human side. Resistance, as is explained, can form to be either passive or active which can come from either the conscious or unconscious behaviour of employees. Secondary research has also highlighted the effects of lack of trust within organisations and the leadership styles adopted by management can bear substantial influence on the levels of resistance within organisations.

The Literature Review concludes by examining the effects of resistance to change and the outcomes it can have on the results on new processes. While much of the literature focuses on the negative aspects to resistance, some authors, as this chapter highlights, take the view that levels of resistance can create more effective and better designed change. It is evident from the research that, while some resist to block changes for personal reasons, others can do so in

an attempt to support the goals of the organisation by assuring more effective methods are employed.

### **7.3 Primary Research Conclusions**

To complete the research objectives outlined, the primary research looked to address the following issues;

- The necessity for change and rationale behind its management.
- The Co-operation between management and employees during planning.
- The level of resistance that emerged and reasoning for it.
- The impact of resistance on the eventual result of the new process.

The key findings relevant from primary research to the above issues will now be presented. Firstly, a key finding that emerged from the primary research was the knowledge each employee had on the necessity for change due to the difficulties their organisations were facing. Varying factors were attributed to this need, such as the economic downturn, increased competitiveness, emergence of new opportunities and a desire to improve internal efficiencies. However, the primary research also identified a clear lack of communication from management to employees of the plans that would be implemented, the ambition of the change and the ultimate outcomes it would bring.

A second finding from the primary research was the levels of co-operation and involvement that existed in the planning and design stages of the new processes. This as a result laid the foundations for the future levels of resistance that would emerge from employees. The findings showed that despite the expertise many employees had in their area, little or no consultation was ever conducted which gave rise not just to resistance, but poor and ineffective planning also.

The primary research identified a third key finding which outlined the levels of resistance and highlighted why it formed. Resistance varied throughout each organisation due to the level of change being implemented and the behaviours of management. Lack of communication and involvement has been shown to be key factors in influencing resistance by individuals. Routines embedded into the culture of an organisation were found to be hardest to change and without establishing a motivation to change, implementation will not become a success. Resistance was found to stem in most organisations almost immediately but done so in an effort to stop the flawed design being pushed through and enable re-planning.

The final key finding from the primary research indicated the impact resistance had to the eventual change. The resistance was shown to cause management to examine initial planning and create a more inclusive approach to designing the change initiative. The author found that in some cases resistance within organisations towards new process implementations can have positive impacts on the overall design and result.

## **7.4 Recommendations**

From examining the literature and conducting primary research, the author is able to form a number of recommendations on how to effectively introduce change and deal with resistance. Due to a number of limitations, further research is needed to carry out a more conclusive and thorough examination of the research objectives.

- The author has identified the role communication has when dealing with change initiatives and its importance in gaining the support of subordinates and ensuring smooth implementation.
- From analysing the primary research the need for continued co-operation between employees and management in the planning can have significant bearing in the effective designing and introduction of change.
- The reasoning behind resistance is a key factor for management to identify to ensure its levels are kept controllable. The author recommends the use of continuous communication and interaction throughout the change process to limit resistance and ensure levels of co-operation are maintained to create greater motivation and desire for the change.
- The findings identified from both primary and secondary research has identified the significant impact resistance to change can bear on its outcome. These findings could benefit future management's understanding and viewing of resistance by moving from the single perspective of negativity to a more positive light on this subject. The findings shown can prove that resistance in many cases can create significant benefits to a change effort and the success of it.

## **7.5 Limitations**

The findings presented in this study are limited by the amount of subjects interviewed and their experiences in this area. The time available to conduct the research along with the experience of the author has lead to a loss in substantial findings and the depth to the research carried out.



## **7.6 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has presented the authors conclusion based upon examination of the primary and secondary research. Recommendations for both organisations and further research have been outlined along with the limitations evident within this study.

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## *Appendix*

# **Appendix**

## **Interview Questions**

### **Employee background:**

- i. How long have you been a member of this organisation?
- ii. What roles have you held within your time working for this company?
- iii. What is your current position and responsibilities at this moment in time within the organisation?
- iv. Have you in your time with this company encountered significant change initiatives to either the structure of your organisation or the behaviour of your own and your colleague's routines?
- v. Has your job role/position been restructured as a result of the change taken place in the organisation? Is this something that has been forced upon you or entered into willingly?

### **Background to the change:**

- vi. Who or what do you believe were the key driving forces of this change?
- vii. How would you describe the scale of the change process implemented by the organisation?
- viii. Was this particular change process in your opinion necessary for the long-term viability and survival of the company or could alterations have been made?
- ix. What were the main positives that the changes being implemented were perceived to bring to the organisation from the outset?

### **The change initiative:**

- x. Did the organisation do its best to communicate the reasoning behind the change, the benefits of it to them as employees and the organisation as a whole?
- xi. Do you feel the methods used to communicate the change to people most affected were adequate?
- xii. Was this change introduced as a step by step process over a period of time, or instead brought about as a radical and immediate endeavour?

- xiii. Was there a clear indication and communication given by management to employees on how the change would be implemented, the purpose of it and the eventual ambition of the company by enacting it?
- xiv. Before implementation happened, were there attempts from management to gauge the acceptance and willingness of employees to engage in the change initiative or to consult with you on issues and concerns with the new process?

### **Resistance to change:**

- xv. In your opinion, what are the main factors influencing employee commitment to any sort of new initiative?
- xvi. Did you witness any evidence in which employees clearly showed difficulties on implementing new procedures and changing from old and embedded habits?
- xvii. Were the fears of staff members held over this change process alleviated in any way by the management of the organisation?
- xviii. Did the change initiative have a significant impact on the culture within the organisation or perhaps simply on the behaviours and attitudes of any groups of staff?
- xix. From your experience of the change, has there been any resistance that you have seen to the change process and, if so, what were the reasons behind this?
- xx. Where do you think this resistance stemmed from? Be it from group behaviour or individual beliefs?
- xxi. Was the resistance that you witnessed towards the change hidden or expressed by employees openly? Further to this do you believe it was intentional or unintentional?
- xxii. What were the procedures implemented in dealing with both the resistors and their issues? i.e. consultation, inclusion or dismissive.
- xxiii. In your opinion do you believe the resistance carried out was caused by an urge to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the change being introduced or to simply prevent any new process from being introduced?
- xxiv. Many change efforts can receive little or no levels of resistance to it. If this was the case in your organisation what do you believe were the reasons for it?

### **Results from Resistance:**

- xxv. Do you believe there were any benefits to the organisation encountering the type of resistance it did?

- xxvi. Did the levels of resistance shown by employees towards the change initiative cause management to work more to justifying the need and reasoning behind the change?
- xxvii. In your own opinion do you believe the resistance that was shown towards the change initiative helped management to reassess and implement a new and more efficient plan for the organisation going forward?
- xxviii. As a result of the resistance shown towards the change were there measures put in place by management to involve employees in the planning and strategising and gain their feedback on how to implement new measures?
- xxix. Overall do you feel there were real and substantial benefits to employees initially resisting the change, causing the initial plans to fail and resulting in a more inclusive and consultative approach from management with them?

# Ethics Contract

June 2014

**Re: Standard Ethics Protocol - An investigation into the effects of employee resistance to the planning and design of organisational change**

Dear Interviewee,

I wish to send my sincere thank you for your agreement to participate in this interview and in helping me complete my research project. Before commencement of the interview I would like to assure you that while involved as a participant in this research study you have a number of options available to you:

- Your involvement in this interview is completely voluntary;
- You have the right to refuse to answer any question you are asked without requiring reasoning;
- You are free to terminate the interview at any stage;

The contents of this interview will be kept strictly confidential however extracts of this interview may be included as part of the research report. Upon transcription of the interview, any recordings made will be immediately destroyed.

To indicate that you have read and understand the contents of this form I would be grateful if you could sign and date below this line.

(Signed)\_\_\_\_\_ (Printed)\_\_\_\_\_

(Date)\_\_\_\_\_

Donnacha Ryan: Masters in Business Studies; Management Stream 2014

# Reflection

## Key learning outcomes

The completion of this dissertation I feel has improved a number of key skills greatly and provided me with a great deal of knowledge both on my subject choice and the experience around completing this assignment. Undoubtedly the skills I have improved include my time management with the meeting of deadlines given to me by my tutor during certain stages of the year. Working to meet these deadlines has thought me the importance of effective time management for this practice to allow for more efficient and higher quality work. Another key skill I feel has greatly been improved is my organisational ability through conducting research, gathering notes and data an ultimately analysing my findings. The effect of having sufficient organisational skills has shown to both improve the quality of work produced and reduce the time needed to produce it.

A skill that I have not been required to utilise before attempting this dissertation is my ability to conduct research and analyse data. The experience gained now in this area I feel will be invaluable in my future careers as I will effectively be able to conduct thorough investigations and research, while being able to produce necessary results. The ability to work and produce ideas independently can be challenging to improve along with having the capability of identifying problems and finding solutions without the support of group members. As the dissertation is an individual endeavour we are forced to improve these areas so as to produce sufficient results. I feel now having completed this that I have the confidence now to undertake other workloads such as this and be able to produce the results required. Before partaking in this course and this dissertation the ability to write academically was never required of me. I feel now having completed both this dissertation and the Masters I have a much greater appreciation for the work researchers do and the benefits they bring.

## What would I do differently

Hindsight is a skill we are all experts on, yet sadly it teaches us only how not to do things again in the future, but cannot improve past results. There are a number of things I would have done differently over the last year should I be offered the chance to go back in time. Almost every student will consider the fact they should have begun their work at an earlier stage or set more realistic plans throughout the year. I feel a number of other things such as the organising of my interviews at an earlier date would have greatly helped my results. Along with this, having worked more on deciding fully my exact research topic at an earlier



date so as to allow more time to conduct secondary research would have alleviated a lot of pressure and ensured more depth in the literature. The software NVivo that we were shown how to analyse research with could have proved to be beneficial in producing my findings and providing a basis for my discussion. If I had the opportunity to return now to the beginning I may have chosen to utilise the software for my primary research. Looking back I feel a resource I wasted was the time that was available to me with my tutor. While we met on regular occasions often I was not as prepared with questions as I should have been which lead to me not achieving as much value from the meetings as I could.

### **How will I use what I have learned?**

I intend to utilise the knowledge I have gained from completing this dissertation in both my professional life. The main skills that I have either acquired or enhanced are ones that will benefit me in my everyday career along with my personal endeavours. More than anything the last year has shown me what I can achieve with the correct motivation which is something that has given me great confidence going forward now. The experience of conducting interviews and interacting with business professionals has taught me a great deal on organisational behaviour and I can now take this forward into my own future careers.

Finally at the beginning of every task this size we experience elements of fear, dread and uncertainty. How we react to these feelings defines who we are as I believe we are never more vulnerable than when we face into the complete unknown. Having now come out the other side, unscathed and more experienced I have a greater level of confidence and belief in my own ability to see myself through the challenges that will ultimately be faced in the future.

*“Don’t cry because it’s over, smile because it happened.” Dr. Seuss*