

A LITERATURE REVIEW ON CHANGE MANAGEMENT: A COMPREHENSIVE SUMMARY

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ABSTRACT

Change management, which falls within the broader theoretical framework of social change (Lewin 1951, 1958), has been a perennially popular topic in the organizational effectiveness and management literature.

Identifying the need for organization-wide change, and leading organizations through that change is widely recognized as one of the most critical and challenging responsibilities of organizational leadership. These responsibilities have become even more important in recent years as organizations are

...living through a time of tremendous sea changes.... Globalization, the disruptive influence of new technologies, the emergence of e-business, and growing electronic connectivity among far-flung financial markets are all accelerating the pace of commerce throughout the world today – in virtually every industry. Add deregulation, political instability, emerging new economies in the

Pacific Rim, and an exploding number of new scientific discoveries (many of which lead quickly to new products and commercial applications), and you have a recipe not only for market turbulence, but also for ... “disruptive phase shifts” in how business is conducted. (Burke and Trahan 2000:xi).

Keywords: change, change management, changing nature

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of new economies has ushered in imminent business opportunities for many organizations, both private and public. This has resulted in most traditional organizations – for example, public sector organizations – accepting the phenomenon of change and often coming to realize that if they do not change they will perish (Beer & Nohria 2000). However, this is easier said than done. Beer and Nohria (2000, p. 1) stated that ‘change remains difficult to pull off’, most organizations ‘have had low success rates [and] the brutal fact is that about 70% of all change initiatives fail’. Likewise, Macredie, Sandom and Paul (1998) maintained that successful organizations of the future, be it private or public, must be prepared to embrace the concept of change management or face extinction. Also, according to Beer and Nohria (2000), many organizations fail in their change initiatives because some senior personnel tend to rush these initiatives in their organizations, losing focus and becoming overwhelmed by the literature advising on why organizations should change, what organizations should strive to accomplish and how organizations should implement change. Thus, it can be argued that implementing change in both private and public organizations is no easy task to accomplish.

Adding to this dilemma is the issue of the need for change and the environment in which organizations currently operate. Burnes (1996a, Kanter (1989) and Peters and Waterman (1982) argued that many modern organizations, including those in the public sector, now find themselves in a volatile environment whereby the need to introduce and manage change successfully has become a competitive necessity. This environment determines the manner in which the organization must operate but as Jury (1997) has stated, there is no accepted definition of what constitutes this current environment. However, a practical working definition is that the environment is closely related to the environmental variables which influence organizations. Simply stated, these environmental variables are political, economical, technological and sociological in nature. These play an

important role in determining the type of change to be implemented and also the speed at which the proposed change or changes are to be implemented.

Well defined and extensively studied by numerous theorists associated with change and change management. Many respected writers in the field offer a range of different emphases or perspectives on change due to the many different ways in which change can be classified. Some theorists classify change according to the type or the rate of change required and this is often referred to as the substance of change (Dawson 1994). Semler (1993) made the case for dismissing the traditional manager-employee narrative in order to produce an organization populated by entrepreneurs, while Bate (1994) proposed a broad definition for the magnitude of change, which he argues may be incremental or transformational. Kanter, Stein and Jick (1992) considered the nature of change and organizational development as a process-driven activity. Senge (1990) has developed the idea of change as learning and writers like Dunphy and Stace (1992) have blended ideas on the role of the individual in the organization with models of organizational design and the facilitation of change based on a situational analysis of forces of change and leadership style requirements.

Although there is a general recognition of the need to manage change successfully in modern organizations, questions regarding the substance of change and how the processes can be managed still remain largely unanswered (Dawson 1994). Traditionally, theorists on change management have argued that the primary purpose of change was to create stability in the organization through the least amount of change initiatives (Weisbond 1976; Stacey 1996). According to Rickards (1999), this approach is guided by methods of scientific enquiry and rational theory development grounded in modernism. Burnes (2000, p. 153) stated that the modern era is characterized by 'mechanistic and hierarchical structures based on the extreme division of labor, and control systems that suppress people's emotions and minimize their scope for independent action'. For Clarke (1999), testimony to the prevalence of modernistic beliefs within the field of organizational change has been the domination of the top-down, rolled out, 'programmatic' approaches, which provide step-by-step guides for managers and change agents.

Added to this, the ever-increasing pace of change in world markets and governments has led to a marked emphasis on the need for organizations to develop dynamic, competitive strategies on an ongoing basis (McHugh 1996). Rather than placing too much emphasis on 'mechanistic and hierarchical structures', 'control systems' (Burnes 2000, p. 153) or top down, rolled out approaches (Clarke 1999), Rickards (1999), Turner (1999) and Lowendahl and Revange (1998) maintained that organizational strategists must go beyond examining how their external and internal organizational contexts interact; they must examine the fundamental assumptions and systematic truths that are dictating organizational strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Phenomenon of Change

For most people, a nation's well-being depends heavily on the quality and performance of its education, government and business sectors. Before the 1980s, most organizations in these sectors operated in an environment that Graetz, Rimmer, Lawrence and Smith (2002, pp. 14–15) described as 'protected ... against a backdrop of relative security, stability and predictability'. As a result, they maintain that most public and private sector organizations saw no specific reason to contribute to a particular goal of change. In contrast to Graetz et al. (2002), other writers like McHugh (1997) maintained that many public sector organizations, both national and international, were judged to be inefficient and ineffective. In order for these organizations to be effective and to improve performance, it became necessary for them to maintain a concrete base of work values and ethics, including proper strategies and work cultures. Additionally, it became important for both employers and employees to have a shared perception of change. Furthermore, it was necessary for both parties to commit to change whenever it was required (Bennett, Fadil and Greenwood 1994). Fitz-Enz (1997) endorsed this view; he argued that consistency and efficiency could only be achieved when strategy was linked to corporate culture and systems. In a similar vein, Gibson, Ivancevich and Donnelly (2000) emphasised that whilst organizational effectiveness (being more than the sum total of individual effectiveness) is determined by a multitude of factors, group effectiveness and individual effectiveness will determine organizational effectiveness, efficiency and success.

To elaborate, Bennett, Fadil and Greenwood (1994), Fitz-Enz (1997), McHugh (1997), Gibson, Ivancevich and Donnelly (2000) and Graetz et al. (2002), asserted that individual effectiveness in the form of employees' skill,

knowledge, attitudes, motivation and work-related stress are factors that impact upon group effectiveness. Employees subjected to one or more of these factors tend to be more productive in the work environment (Graetz et al. 2002). However, group effectiveness, in the form of cohesiveness, leadership, structure, status, roles and norms, plays a vital role in determining organizational effectiveness and efficiency. Furthermore, organizational effectiveness is dependent upon the environment, technology, strategy, structure, processes and work culture (Gibson et al. 2000). Thus, if organizations are cognizant of the viewpoints expressed by Gibson et al. (2000) in relation to effectiveness and efficiency, and endorse change and change management, they are likely to outperform their competitors. In a study derived from public management research on performance determinants and nursing home care literature in public sector and non-public sector organizations, the findings on 14,423 facilities indicated that public sector organizations were similar in terms of quality, and performed significantly better than non-public sector organizations. It was also found that public-sector nursing homes had a significantly higher share of recipients (Amirkhanyan, Kim and Lambright 2008).

In light of the above discussion, change in the context of contemporary organizations needs to be defined at the outset. According to Kanter (1992, p. 279):

Change involves the crystallization of new possibilities (new policies, new behaviors, new patterns, new methodologies, new products or new market ideas) based on the reconceptualised patterns in the institution. The architecture of change involves the design and construction of new patterns, or the reconceptualisation of old ones, to make new, and hopefully more productive actions possible.

Lending support to the above view, Kanji and Moura (2003, p. 292) and Lycke (2003, p. 206), state that changes can be numerous and could also include changes to procedures, structures, rules and regulations, technology, training and development and customer needs within organizations.

Kanter, Stein and Jick (1992, p. 11) considered change to be 'the shift in behaviour of the whole organization'. In other words, most organizations are influenced by changes in the environment that require adaptation of internal processes (Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross, Roth and Smith 1999). However, adding a new dimension to the definition of change, Robbins (1990) maintained that change should not be incidental in nature. All change initiatives must be planned in consultation with employees. Dunphy (1996) had a similar view, stating that all change initiatives must be planned actively with all the relevant stakeholders. Furthermore, planned change must have a specific purpose in order for the organisation to remain in a viable state. In addition, such change should be a continuous and adaptive process in order to sway 'employees so that they buy into new ideas or shaping the formation of employees' identities so that their intuitions become consistent with the [organizational] strategic direction' (Lawrence, Dyck, Maitlis and Mauws 2006, p. 66). These writers held the view that if the organization fails to introduce continuous and adaptive change, they will 'experience adaptation without the energy that comes from employees buying into different approaches and perspectives and reformulating their identities in ways that match the new direction' (Lawrence, Dyck, Maitlis and Mauws 2006, p. 66).

It is also important that employees be afforded key opportunities to participate in change initiatives. Zimmerman (1995) argued that employees should always be the key players in the facilitation, implementation and management of effective change because employees are directly involved in the process of change in some form or the other. It is just as important, to recognize that employees can also be the main obstacle to implementing change. Thus, in order to limit opposition to change, Svedberg and Douglas (2005) advocated the incremental change approach in organizations that face this dilemma. This approach is perceived as 'fine-tuning ... making relatively minor adjustments in a system' (Swedberg and Douglas 2005, p. 51). Likewise Nadler and Tushman (1995, p. 22) explained, incremental change as a series of minor changes, each of which 'attempts to build on the work that has already been accomplished and improves the functioning of the enterprise in really small increments'. Proponents of this approach to change see incremental change as a normal and ongoing process occurring in both private and public organizations. This type of change fosters more effective ways of getting employees to work in collaboration and accord, eventually resulting in the organization performing more efficiently and effectively (Swedberg and Douglas 2005; Quinn 1996; Nadler and Tushman 1995). Whilst this approach is favoured by some organizations (Swedberg and Douglas 2005), other writers like Quinn (1996) see no merit in its use. Quinn (1996, p. 3), maintained that this type of change 'is usually limited in scope ... [it] usually does not disrupt our past patterns ... it is an extension of the past'. However, in spite of the latter criticism, Swedberg and Douglas (2005) stated that some organizations favor the incremental change approach because it is a normal and ongoing part of any effective organization. As employees work together, better ways of working together emerge to help the organization run more smoothly, effectively, and efficiently.

Furthermore, in some organizations, the continual 'fine-tuning' of processes (Swedberg and Douglas 2005) could mean creating better ways to involve employees in organizational processes or improving employees' access to one another and providing meaningful information about the organization. These incremental changes, which might involve many resources, in time, may lead to a fundamental shift in an organization's way of doing business, as well as doing particular tasks better. Thus, incremental change involves the kind of 'constant tinkering' that all effective and efficient organizations continually engage in to 'improve the fit among the components of the organization' (Nadler and Tushman 1995, p. 22). Organizations choosing not to engage totally in incremental change sometimes implement the following types of change:

- fundamental – the implementation of a standards-based approach which necessitates dramatic changes in the organization;
- transitional – this involves the slow evolution of the organization through the introduction of mergers, new processes or technologies; and
- Transformational – the organization rethinks its mission, culture, activities and critical elements of success.

Thus, because of the many types of change that an organization can make, it is imperative that organizations give serious thought to the kind, depth and complexity of the necessary changes before implementing them (Dervitsiotis 2003, p. 261).

Harvey and Brown (1996) offer another viewpoint of change. They suggest organizations that eschew change must be able to sustain a stable identity and achieve operational goals. For successful change to occur, organizations are required to foster good coordination, strong leadership, and clear communication in order to exploit and develop their resources (Ford and Saren 1996). For these relationships to develop, organizations must acknowledge that relationships are symbolic of living structures with inherent dynamic features and are characterized by continuous change processes.

Senge et al. (1999, p. 15), viewed change as 'profound' when organizations 'build capacity for ongoing change' by getting to the 'heart of issues' that primarily focus on the thinking behind the change processes instead of processes favouring structural and strategic changes. Thus, according to these writers, change must also take into consideration values, fears, behaviors and the aspirations of all stakeholders involved in the change process. De Jager (2001, p. 24) stated that:

Change is a simple process. At least, it's simple to describe. It occurs whenever we replace the old with the new. Change is about travelling from the old to the new, leaving yesterday behind in exchange for the new tomorrow. But implementing change is incredibly difficult. Most people are reluctant to leave the familiar behind. We are all suspicious about the unfamiliar; we are naturally concerned about how we get from the old to the new, especially if it involves learning something new and risking failure.

According to this view, change does involve moving from the known into the unknown and because the future is uncertain it may adversely affect employees' competencies, their sense of worth and coping abilities. It must be realized that most employees do not support change, unless compelling reasons convince them to do so. Thus, for change to be successful, it must involve amongst other factors, vision, mission, communication, strong leadership, participation and culture. To elaborate, vision involves developing a future picture of the organization (Hamel and Prahalad 1994); mission helps to set the scene for organizational change (Senge and Roberts 1994); communication and strong leadership are pivotal in preparing the organization for change as it guides the organization through turbulent phases (Handy 1996); participation involves giving all stakeholders a fair say in the change process (Zand 1997); and organizational culture is a shared understanding of the workings of the organization and influences change initiatives (McAdams 1996). In other words, change is a way of life that organizations must face in order to maintain a competitive advantage in both private and public sector environments. Thus, to foster the development of positive relationships, organizations must realize that it is important to have an integrated approach to any change program that involves combining structural, technological and behavioral approaches (Harvey and Brown 1996, p. 410). With respect to public sector organizations, the Office for the Commissioner for Public Employment (OCPE), in its 2004 report (Review of the Office for the Commissioner for Public Employment 2004, p. 14), identified five significant risks facing the public sector in the next five to ten years:

1. Inadequate governance and accountability frameworks.
2. Continuation of the current public sector human resource management [policies].

3. Insufficient public sector employees in key areas.
4. An imbalance in the skills of the Public Sector necessary to meet its future obligations.
5. Inflexible employment systems.

Change Management

Change management, according to Szamosi and Duxbury (2002), is an integral part of life and is a constant in most organizations. Some public sector organizations, for example the SATC, face competition from other government funded tourism commissions nationally and internationally. In this particular case study, it has become necessary for the SATC to manage change effectively in order to maintain its competitive advantage both nationally and internationally. Burnes (1996a, 1996b) maintains that organizations that effectively manage change have a greater advantage over their competitors. However, according to Stewart and Kringas (2003), 'change management, like 'change', is a difficult term to define. Thus, the term 'change management', according to Stewart and Kringas (2003, p. 2), has become 'a ubiquitous theme in management literature'. However, in spite of this label, Pettigrew, Woodham and Cameron (2001, p. 697) stated that change management has become 'one of the great themes in the social sciences'.

According to Nickols (2004, p. 1) the term 'managing change' has two meanings, both 'the making of changes in a planned and managed or systematic fashion' and 'the response to changes over which the organization exercises little or no control'. In this sense, the need to identify organization-wide change has become one of the most critical and challenging responsibilities of organizations (Pettigrew, Woodman and Cameron 2001). This was less evident in the past, where organizations controlled their own destinies and operated in what Beckhard and Pritchard (1992) describe as a relatively stable and predictable environment. This is in contrast with the manner in which some present day organizations operate. Writers, like Kotter (1996), Mead (2005) and Sheil (2001) maintain that currently, factors like balance sheets, locations; organizational culture and structure control the destinies and operations of some organizations. Kotter (1996) elaborates on this point by maintaining that organizations are now facing different challenges imposed by globalization thereby influencing the manner in which they are 'controlled'. Control has now become a more arduous task than in the past. To explain, if globalization is to be described as a process that has eroded the influence of national institutions and the restriction of borders, then it could be argued that globalization has resulted in the transformation of relations between countries, regions and organizations (Mead 2005). However, it must be stated that Mead's (2005) view could be construed debatable because those advocating globalization would consider this view as a simplification of the process. For writers like Corsi (2000), Dierks (2001) and Richardson (2002), globalization has done more than just transforming relations between countries, regions and organizations. These writers maintain that globalization has opened up social, economic and political boundaries currently in place in affected organizations.

Likewise, Sheil (2001, p. 11), offered a more comprehensive understanding of the term, stating that globalization has resulted in:

...an increasing consciousness of the organization of finance, investment, production, distribution and marketing in ways that pertain to or embrace the world; a phenomenon that has both reinforced and been reinforced by the wider, more longstanding but continuing history of technological developments that have reduced the significance of geographic space.

Whilst proponents of globalization, for example, Corsi(2000), Dierks (2001), Sheil (2001) and Richardson (2002) argued the benefits of the process, Kotter (1996, p. 18) posited the argument that while creating greater opportunities for organizations, globalization has also resulted in the creation of numerous business hazards. As a result, organizations have been forced to make and manage improvements in order to compete with other similar organizations, not only to prosper but also in order to survive. He also maintained that 'globalization ... [is] driven by a broad and powerful set of forces associated with technological change, international economic integration, domestic market maturation ... , and the collapse of worldwide communism' (Kotter 1996, p. 18). This view was supported by Burke and Trahan (2000, p. 11) who wrote: 'globalization ... is accelerating the pace of commerce throughout the world today – in virtually every industry [resulting in] disruptive phase shifts in how business is conducted'. In essence, both the viewpoints of Kotter (1996) and Burke and Trahan (2000), imply that for organizations to gain the competitive edge over their rivals there has to be effective change and change management processes in place.

These processes can involve elements of organizational structure and culture, as described by Beckhard and Pritchard (1992), Kotter (1996), Burke and Trahan (2000), Sheil (2001), Nickols (2004) and Mead (2005). Elements could consist of balance sheets; organizational locations; organizational culture; organizational structure; organizational control; transformational relationships; technological developments. It must be stated that the nature and degree of transformation will be dependent upon the needs of the organization. This will mean that some organizations might embrace transformational change and in doing so must have effective processes and practices in place to manage those changes. Thus, one of the primary functions of management is to devise efficient and effective ways of promoting change in the organization whilst at the same time encouraging all employees to accept the change. In other words, it is a process of seeing to it that organizational goals are met by using properly the resources of the organization. Any degree of transformation implemented will also impact upon the culture of the organization (Porras and Robertson 1992). In this context, culture may be defined as:

A pattern of basic assumptions ... that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (Schein 1985a, p. 9).

Porras and Robertson (1992) stated that maintaining lasting change is no easy task, as most organizations comprise of more than one culture, thereby making change management difficult. Thus, for lasting change, it is necessary for organizations to strive to change the behaviors, rites, rituals and values of individuals in organizations. Implementing and managing change in organizations however can be both messy and ambiguous and the process does not resemble well-oiled machines as is often depicted in the literature (Bolman and Deal 1997). Bolman and Deal (1997), supported by Palmer and Dunford (1996), have likened organizational environments to dinosaurs. The latter writers argued that, like dinosaurs, some organizations are cumbersome, slow to adapt and prone to extinction. Furthermore, they also compare some organizations to leaking boats that are doomed to sink. Thus, to prevent failure, organizations should be clear about why they want change to happen; what is it about the organization that warrants change; what techniques can be used to bring about lasting change; and how to deal with challenges that change and non-change may bring (Palmer and Dunford 1996). Furthermore, Palmer and Dunford (1996) also noted that many organizations implement change as a two-fold process: incremental or transformational, thereby emphasizing the importance of clear well-thought out change management processes and practices.

As discussed previously, Kotter (1996, pp. 3-4) argued that change has helped some organizations adapt, from a management perspective, to both the micro and macroeconomic forces currently prevailing; to achieve a competitive advantage in relation to their competitors; and has provided a few organizations with a stable positioning for the future. He also points out that in many organizations change management has been less than successful resulting in 'wasted resources and burned-out, scared, or frustrated employees' (Kotter 1996, p. 3). To substantiate, Kotter (1996, p. 16) elaborates eight errors that have significantly contributed to the downside of change management, namely:

- Allowing too much complacency in the organization;
- Failure to create clear and powerful guidelines;
- Restricted vision in terms of future planning;
- Lack of communication in the organization;
- Failure to deal with problems immediately as and when they arise; concentration on long term gains at the expense of short term benefits;
- Acknowledging change victory sooner than it is achieved; and
- A failure to firmly anchor changes in the corporate culture of the organization.

To remedy these errors, Kotter (1996) suggested the following:

- The management of change practices and strategies should be well implemented;
- All acquisitions must be planned to be in keeping with the expected outcomes (synergies);
- Re-engineering should occur in the shortest space of time for the change to be effective, be cost effective and aligned closely to the change;
- Downsizing should occur in a controlled and cost-saving manner; and

- Quality programmes should be carefully selected so that the organization will achieve the desired end results.

Thus, for organizations to survive in the 21st century, they must shift from traditional practices of management, as highlighted by Kotter (1996) to contemporary practices characterized by attributes commonly described as vision; contemporary values; quality mindset; stakeholder focus; speed orientation; innovativeness; flat structures; cross-functionality; flexibility; global focusing; and networking (Wind and Maine 1999).

Change management can be seen as a generative process that changes according to organizational needs whilst still maintaining its overall vision. Beckhard and Pritchard (1992, p. 14), maintain that change management is most effective when learning and change processes interact positively with each other and when both employers and employees realize that 'change is a learning process and learning is a change process'. A similar viewpoint is also emphasized by Nadler and Tushman (1995) who maintain that organizations are made up of many differing parts, providing a range of interrelated and differing challenges to all employees. According to these writers, the four main components of an organization are:

People: This comprises the employees' behavior, knowledge, skills, needs, perceptions, expectations, background, demographics and experiences that are brought into the organization.

Work: This refers to the basic and inherent tasks to be done by the organization and its units. It may include the activity in which the organization is engaged, particularly in light of its strategy.

Informal organizational arrangements: These are the implicit and unwritten arrangements (also known as 'organizational culture') that sometimes complement formal organizational arrangements. They also involve the common values and beliefs and the new relationships that develop within and between groups, communication, influence and political patterns that combine in the creation of the informal organization.

Formal organizational arrangements: These arrangements include structures, systems, processes, methods and processes formally developed to enable employees to perform tasks consistent with organizational strategy, as well as mechanisms for control and coordination, human resource management, reward systems, job design and work environment.

Nadler and Tushman (1995) stated that for change management to succeed, the view that organizations are simply about the 'task' must be ignored. Rather, emphasis should be directed to the range of formal and informal arrangements that are influenced by those that action them, namely, the employees themselves. Employees operate in 'complex adaptive systems' that bring all the formal and informal components into simultaneous action through constant adaptation within and between organizational systems (Stacey 1996). Also, Waterman (1987, p. 218) stated that:

Organizations as entities are complex beings. To understand organizations, you can't just look at the one way. They are rational decision-makers. They are 'irrational' creatures of habit. They are 'irrational' (and unpredictable) products of internal politics and power.

Thus, in order to avoid serious repercussions in relation to change management, the employee, group or organizational system should not be treated exclusively or simplistically. Wheatley (1994, p. 3), writing on change management, stated that 'the layers of complexity, the sense of things being beyond our control and out of control, are but signals of our failure to understand a deeper reality of organizational life, and of life in general'.

CONCLUSION

Although the change management literature generally recognizes the need for change initiatives, the potential for failure is great. The Harvard Business School tracked the impact of change efforts among the Fortune 100 and found that all companies had implemented at least one change program between 1980 and 1995, but only 30 percent produced an improvement in bottom-line results that exceeded the company's cost of capital (Pascale et al. 1997:139). Beer and Nohria (2000:133) found that about 70 percent of change initiatives fail.

Reasons for failure include:

- ◆ The key to achieving and sustaining significant change is changing the basic ways of thinking within the organization, but this is difficult to achieve and sustain (Senge et al. 1999). Companies resist new truths with a great deal of emotion (Martin 1998:114).
- ◆ Change management requires leadership, poses both personal and organizational stresses and challenges, and, if not done or done poorly makes things worse (Goodstein and Burke 1995:7). Even when an organization can

figure out what to do, it still has to figure out how to make goals and methods transparent enough that employees are willing to take some calculated risks (Martin 1998:137).

◆ Change needs to be implemented over the long term, with careful attention to the disruptive aspects of change management. Periods of intense change need to be followed by periods of consolidation. Organizations need to plan for ten years of effort to accomplish a major transformational change (Kotter 1998). Skipping steps creates only an illusion of speed and never produces a satisfying result. Critical mistakes in any of the phases can have a devastating impact, slowing momentum and negating previous gains (Kotter 1998:2).

◆ Because of the need to maintain a capability to conduct existing business during the interim and the entrenched structures and practices that must be overcome, there is general agreement that it may be easier to create the necessary conditions in new organizations than in existing organizations.

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