

**WHAT MANAGERS SHOULD DO IN
CONDUCTING AN ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE?
A HUMAN ASPECTS APPROACH**

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ABSTRAK

Pada saat ini perusahaan-perusahaan Indonesia menghadapi trend ekonomi yang menurun dan instabilitas yang mempengaruhi operasi kesehariannya. Akibatnya, banyak perusahaan-perusahaan "dipaksa" untuk melakukan perubahan organisational agar tetap survive. Pada beberapa kasus, manajer diharapkan untuk mengambil kegiatan yang sesuai untuk menyiapkan dan membantu karyawan. Selain sebagai grup yang mudah rapuh dalam organisasi, karyawan juga memainkan peran kritis untuk kesuksesan perubahan itu sendiri. Beberapa isu penting perlu dipertimbangkan manager dalam kaitannya untuk meningkatkan kesiapan dan kesigapan akan perubahan itu, yaitu sifat dari perubahan, hubungan antara perubahan organisational dan pembelajaran organisasi, respon karyawan terhadap perubahan, pendekatan terhadap proses perubahan, dan elemen-elemen kunci untuk menjadi pemimpin perubahan yang efektif..

INTRODUCTION

Many countries such as Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Japan, Russia, United States, Australia and just recently Brazil have been struggling to cope with great economic crisis. The crisis has an immense effect on the company's day-to-day operation to its corporate strategy worldwide. This situation has underlined the major issue of change that any organisation contends with. A special attention needs to be addressed to the Indonesian case, where the crisis has been taking place for nearly two years. The economic crisis together with the country's political instability and the social crisis have been creating a vicious cycle. The impact on the business sector is even greater compare to those business sectors in other countries. The value of rupiah was falling against the US dollar before finally being steadily high at a rate of around

three folds of its original exchange rate. It was not stable enough until *Brazilian* economic down turn shakes the Indonesian currency.

Such circumstances are quite unpredictable and happened quickly and have never been experienced before. Most business institutions did not incorporate these potential shocks into their daily operations as well as their business forecasts. Consequently, many of them were 'forced' to shut down along with millions of employee lay-offs. Therefore, there is an urgent need for every single company to start changing their usual way of operating and to face the reality. Complacency is somehow a barrier to analyse the reality objectively because it produces over self-confidence about what and how they are doing so far.

Companies who survived from this initial blast have been considering some new techniques and strategies in order to keep their business on track. Some techniques that are likely to be taken are business reorganisation, restructuring, downsizing, merger, and acquisition. An illustration on how popular and reliable these techniques are shown by the Securities Data Company. According to the data, the value of such corporate consolidations were significantly increased in the United States case with the percentage of 27% in 1996 compared to the previous year (Lipin in Boockholdt, 1997). However, managers must also take into account the drawback behind these tempted techniques. A research conducted by the Fortune on 1,000 companies shows that leading practitioners of radical corporate re-engineering success rates are well below 50%, some say they are as low as 20% (Strebel, 1996). Consequently, a very careful decision must be made on what technique to adopt.

Under any major organisational change, managers must be aware of the end 'victims' that is the employees. Boockholdt's (1997) emphasises that any consolidation technique to be adopted will always create problems to the human issues or so called the soft issues. Company's financial situation as the hard issue may be under risk during the change process, however, employees regardless the size of their individual contributions, are likely to face the heaviest risk. Managers must realise that employees' roles are important due to the spirit of the organisation that is built upon their individual dedication and motivation. Ironically, employees often face a situation where no significant bargaining power is available.

Considering the importance of the employees' position in any organisational change, this writing will focus on some issues that require a great deal of attention in today's business environment. The discussion is made up of seven sections. In the first section, the nature of change will be presented in order to describe a general picture of today's change. The second section focuses on the organisational change, its source and type of change. In section three, the relationship between organisational change and organisational learning will be provided to improve an understanding in the interrelationship of both concepts. The fourth section will discuss how to enhance employees' preparedness for change and its relation to reactions to change which includes several topics, such as metaphors, resistance to change, psychological ownership, and cynicism & optimism. The approach to change process proposed by some experts will be introduced in the fifth section. The next section will examine several critical characteristics to become an effective change leader. Finally, the whole discussion will be concluded in the section seven.

THE NATURE OF CHANGE

Change that occurs in the environment is not just a recent issue. Heraclitus (in Conner, 1992, p. 37), an ancient Greek philosopher, some twenty-five hundred years ago, mentioned that "we cannot dip our toes into the same river twice". In those days, even ancient people had faced simultaneous transitions similar to what we are now dealing with. This change has been widely experienced and highly acknowledged in this millennium theoretically evidenced by the variety of textbooks, a wide range of articles as well as the never-ending discussion on the related issue. However, there are significant differences between those two *different eras* of change. According to Conner (1992), today's change involves, first, a higher number of occurrences than in any previous point of human history. Secondly, the momentum on today's change has dramatically increasing, that acquires a shorter period of time before another change occurs. Thirdly, a higher level of complexity on the change is involved as there has been an increasing number of interrelations amongst individuals, organisations, and society. This argument is specifically in line with Handy's (1989) acknowledgment on his book entitled "The Age of Unreason", that the meaning of change has even

changed itself, that it is not what it used to be. Change now implies the mix of danger and opportunity.

ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

Change is defined as a definite situation that occurs in the past, nowadays and in the future. Effective organisations should not avoid change, on the contrary, they must anticipate and adjust their daily operations in order to keep up with the speed of change. It is believed that the average life cycle of an organisation is five years (Handy, 1989). Similar to what applies in the product life cycle concept, an organisation also performs sort of similar steps of introduction, growth, maturity, and followed by a decline (Kotler, 1996). Under this concept, an organisation should avoid the decline stage to happen by improving its performance over time.

Change is often difficult to predict, therefore, leaders must always analyse all factors that may influence the organisation. Narayanan and Nath (1983) identify a typology of organisational change captured from some change theories that involves source of change and type of change as seen on figure 1 below.

Figure 1. A typology of organisational change

		SOURCE OF CHANGE	
		Internal	External
TYPE OF CHANGE	Natural	Internal dynamics of organisations create life cycles	Environments induce changes outside managerial control
	Adaptive	Managerial action brings about changes	Environments and managerial responses to them create change

Source : V.K. Narayanan and Raghu Nath, *Organization Theory : A Strategic Approach*, Richard D. Irwin, 1993, p. 137.

Source of change is distinguished into internal and external factors, while type of change is classified into natural and adaptive changes. From the perspective of the Indonesian companies, the internal-natural change is identified as an organisational life cycle as mentioned above, while the economic downturns and rapidly changing technology are classified as external-natural changes. The internal-adaptive change is portrayed for example by the leaders' role in building the company mission, while the

external-adaptive is more likely triggered by the changing resource situation, for instance the company's cash flows.

In order to anticipate these changes, companies are obliged to clarify their values, develop new strategies, and learn new ways of operating. Carr et al. (1996) relates this issue with the leader's responsibility to manage and sustain change in their organisations as part of a continuous process of improvement, renewal, and transformation (Carr et al., 1996). The topic of continues improvement is in correspondence with the concept of Total Quality Improvement (TQM). Although some authors claim that TQM focuses more on productivity and statistical data for assessment rather than the soft issues, however, its basic idea is still relevant as it incorporates all human elements in the organisation to achieve the ultimate organisational goals. Heifetz & Laurie (1997) emphasise the close relationship between organisational change and its human elements within the organisation. They point out that the solution for such change process resides not in the executive suite but in the collective intelligence of employees at all levels. In other word, the only way to successfully undertaking change is by putting sufficient attention on the employee.

ORGANISATION LEARNING

Change and learning are very closely related. It is argued that if changing is another word for learning, then the theories of learning will also be the theories of changing (Handy, 1989). Basically, those who are always learning are those who can ride the waves of change and who see a changing world as full of opportunities rather than of damages. They are the ones most likely to be the survivors in a time of discontinuity. Bridges (1986) recommends the necessity to design an organisation, either a brand new organisation or a consolidated organisation, with an ability to adapt to the future change. Therefore, employees are prepared and able to learn for the next change while dealing with the current one by equipping them with a high level of capability and adaptability. Such insight has inspired John Brown, a CEO of British Petroleum who admits that learning is at the heart of a company's ability to adapt to a rapidly changing environment (Prokesh, 1997, p. 147). This whole issue

drives to a conclusion that learning is very significant to accelerate a change process (Handy, 1989; Senge, 1992).

THE EMPLOYEE REACTIONS ON AN ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

A comprehensive understanding on an organisational change is essential for both managers and employees. The perception towards the meaning of change between those two parties must not be in conflict in order to prevent misunderstanding. This is beneficial for managers, as they will be able to gain a full support from all level of the organisation. For reference purposes, many organisations fail to survive because the number of people at every level who make committed and imaginative contributions to organisational success is simply too small (Pascale et al., 1997).

Most discussion on change seems to differentiate people within the organisation into two groups in relation to change. Managers, on one hand, are usually tempted to strive for competitiveness, therefore they require employee's enthusiasm, acceptance, and commitment (Strebel, 1996). On the other hand, employees normally perceive any changes will disrupt their work environment, status quo, security, and feel of trust. As a result, the employee's will be likely to respond in forms of resistance, opposition, and acceptance with accommodation (Carnall, 1986). Although these unmatched expectations may create managers' frustration and desperation, however, they must not misjudge these normal reactions as illogical, harmful, and counter-productive (King & Anderson, 1995, p. 180). In fact, they must strive for managing employees for the sake of a successful change.

Managers must also put a great deal of attention on fairness as an organisational justice perspective. Principally, fair process will influence attitude and behaviour that are critical toward high performance; Subsequently, managers have to understand how to manage their employees and assist them so they are able to be proactive and support the management.

Carr et al. (1996) suggests that workforce and management can response to change either positively or negatively. Ideally, all business is aiming for positive responses and is trying to reduce the negative ones. Many theories suggest change agent, not necessarily managers, to enhance employees' preparedness for change in

order to reduce the possibility of negative reactions. For that purpose, following are four key issues to discuss; metaphors, resistance to change, psychological ownership, and cynicism & optimism.

Metaphors

Some scientists argue that understanding metaphor is a very useful tool in conveying organisational change messages (Palmer & Dunford, 1992, p. 9; Marshak, 1996, p. 147) and essential in building managerial skills (Morgan in Palmer & Dunford (1992, p. 16)). Some theories reveal that metaphors provide managers with an ability to invent evocative images of stories that can resonate with the challenges at hand and help employees to achieve desired goals, or to cope with the unknown. In addition, metaphors present a quick, concise and effective explanations (Ortony in Palmer and Dunford (1992, p. 8)).

In order to utilise metaphors appropriately, it is important to firstly identify what sort of metaphorical type an organisation represents. For this purpose, Marshack (1996) recommends four metaphorical types of organisations; mechanical, biological, cognitive and relational.

Company that embraces a mechanical metaphor will perceive its organisation as a machine made up of independent parts and joint together by design. An illustration of this particular metaphor is as seen on a research report conducted by Coulton, Duncan, Lee and Sitalaksmi (1998) on a merger of three giants Polyolefin manufacturing. During the merger process, the change agents who consist of several key managers from both companies were very task-focused. They put their best effort to maintain or even to increase productivity, therefore often neglected the soft issues. Based on the interview, managers and employees who were mostly engineers have contributed to the application of such mechanical metaphors. This reality has also practised by the change agents who tend to treat the employees as parts of the machine. One of them even commented 'So we amalgamated those three companies (Exxon, Mobile, and Orica) into one'. It was also revealed that regardless how hard they tried to change this behaviour, under pressure the employees tend to revert to type.

Metaphors were not popular as a method to deliver the change message, and it was disclosed that hierarchical barrier between the employees and the managers were a reason to blame for. Interestingly, a small number of managers utilised some casual metaphors (not particularly refer to mechanical metaphors) to describe merger such as "musical chair", "begins in heaven and ends in hell", or "we need to trim the sails, batten down the hatches and weather the storm".

In the biological metaphorical fields, the organisation is perceived as an organism that sometimes gets sick and need cure. The leaders will be striving for survival and use instinct quite often. While the cognitive metaphor is related to thinking, knowing, reasoning, calculating, learning, awareness and so on. The last type is the relational metaphorical field that is basically representing imagery of a pattern of political alliances where the leader acts as the fashioner and maker. It is mostly related to a textile imagery that includes weaving, sewing, pattern making, fabric cutting, and knitting. Regardless the organisation's metaphorical field, understanding this issue will assist managers and leaders to approach the employees and communicate with them during the change process.

Resistance to change

Readiness for change is closely related to resistance to change. Resistance to change is defined, as any attempt to maintain the status quo when there is pressure for change (Connor & Lake, 1994). The authors categorise the rationale of this reaction into barriers to understanding, barriers to accept, and barriers to action. Barrier to understand exists when an employee does not attain sufficient information on the change, therefore will build an obstacle to understand and will further result in barrier to accept the management's reason for change. A lack in ability to act as a result of less strong in bargaining power will also increase an employee's resistance to change. Kanter (1984), on the other hand, refers to more specific causes that are loss of control, excess uncertainty, surprise, cost of confusion, competence concerns, ripple effects, more work, and threat.

Some people often experience resistance to change and promoting change at the same time. It is indeed confusing, but it is worthwhile to acknowledge it since it is empirically resulted in a psychological ownership within an organisation (Dirks et al,

1996). This dilemmatic situation is widely practised by both managers and employees. They normally promote change when the change is self-initiated, evolutionary, and additive, because they are not radically pulled out from their comfort zone and have a sufficient time to adjust to the new environment more naturally. At the same time, a resistance to change occurs as the impact of an imposed, revolutionary, and subtractive change.

Psychological ownership

Managers must aware of employee's psychological ownership of the organisation. The longer period of time an employee work, for a company especially if no major changes are experienced before, the more careful action to prepare them for the change is required. A psychological ownership occurs when an organisation is perceived as the object of possessiveness that has been grounded psychologically (Dirks et al., 1996). This ownership usually begins when an employee signs her or his employment contract (Streble, 1996). According to the theory, there is a close link between psychological ownership and trust. It is just similar to a family context where the children, analogous to the employees in a company, are often protective and hold a possessiveness of their family. By trying to maintain the good family name, the children are expecting sincere attention and understanding from their parents as an exchange. Thus, if parents do not bluntly explain any major changes to be taken that will affect their daily lives, the children will possibly feel left behind and neglected. Therefore, a situation where rumours on the change are well spread and no previous official announcement from the management often generates a feeling of violation towards employees' trust and loyalty. In fact, if lacking trust in the change process happens, employees could see only its negative side (Kim & Maubergne, 1997) or may encourage them to become cynical and probably build their resistance to change (Strebel, 1996).

In addition to this psychological ownership concept, Strebel (1996) emphasises the magnitude of personal contract that represents the reciprocal obligations and mutual commitments between the organisation and the employees. It is claimed that personal contract plays a big role in avoiding the employee's resistant to occur. When a change is initiated, a revision on this contract must also be taken. A

company that has successfully applied this technique was Philip Electronics some years ago. The company was facing a critical situation as the result of a high competition in electronic industry. It was also threatened by bankruptcy after once had a golden age of prosperity as it gained an excellence reputation and financial strength. Philip Electronics had a tradition of lifelong employment as part of the company culture and had driven to an exchange of job security for loyalty to the company and to individual managers. The new CEO, Jan Timmer, decided to reinforce a shocking treatment at his company. He then dealt firstly with his managers by offering new personal contracts. This action was then driven down to a lower management level and even to the very end of employee level. Once all employees held the revised contract, it indicated the beginning of the change in the company's culture. As a result, the company had successfully imposed the change. Moreover, Philip has increased its sales gradually from 4.3% in 1990 to 6.2% in 1994. However, a cut of 22% of the workforce by the end of 1991 was unavoidable.

Cynicism and optimism

Lacking in employee's preparedness for change may also create cynicism. According to Rechers et al. (1997), cynicism on an organisational change often combines pessimism about the likelihood of successful change with the blame of those responsible for change as incompetent, lazy, or both. It has significant impact on the employee's commitment, satisfaction, enthusiasm, and motivation. To some extent, a personal contract violation is more likely resulted in employees' cynicism (Andersson, 1996). It is also analysed that the level of cynicism depends on the employee's self-esteem, locus of control, equity sensitivity, negative affectivity, machiavellianism, work ethic, demographic, and group norms. As the cynicism level and resistance to change decreasing, a positive reaction and optimism gradually exist.

APPROACH TO CHANGE PROCESS

Successful change is a managed change that has become a general rule for leaders to conduct organisational change (Carr et al., 1996). One of the aspects in a managed change is to increase employee's readiness. Leaders must comprehend how employees deal with their *internal psychological* conflict during the transition period

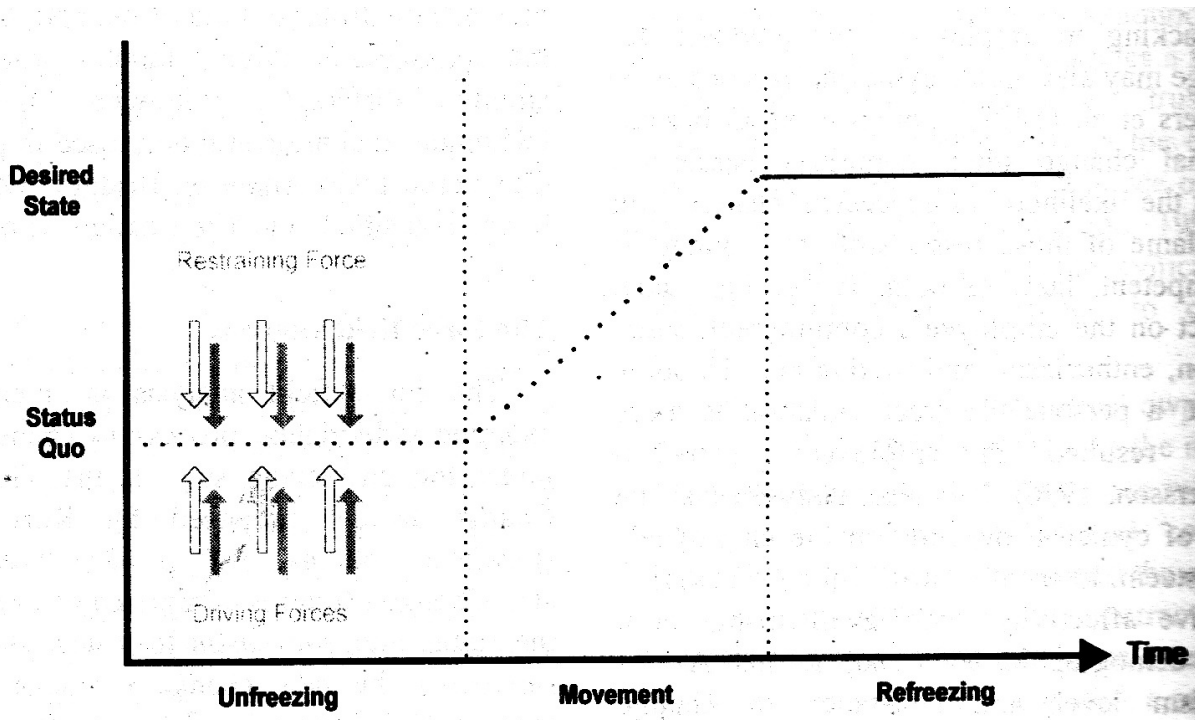
so that the employee's reactions such as resistance to change, cynicism, and optimism can be directed. Therefore, it is essential to be clear about the transition mode before discussing any further on the leader's responsibility. Many management scientists propose approaches in managing organisational transition. Although they offer a different kind of method, however, the approach in solving human problems is slightly different. Following are three techniques that are commonly used in practise; The Force Field Analysis, Bridges' Organisational Transition, and The Change Grid Model.

The force field analysis

The force field analysis is intended to examine individuals' process to change. It is under the unfreezing step of the Three-step Change Model proposed by Kurt Lewin (Lewin in Robbins, 1998, p. 683). The Three-step Change Model is comprised of *unfreezing* the status quo, *movement* to a new state, and *unfreezing* the new change to make it permanent (See Figure 2). Burke (1996) recommends that the first step is important to unfreeze the present level of behaviour so that will reduce prejudice. Once this state is achieved, the refreezing stage takes place that refers to building and strengthens the new behaviour.

The Force field analysis consists of two forces that drive individual's behaviour towards change; the restraining forces and the driving forces. Restraining forces are defined as forces that hinder movement away from the status quo, while driving forces are classified as forces that direct behaviour away from the status quo. It is suggested to decrease the restraining forces and to increase the driving forces therefore will drive us to improve and move ourselves to attain the desired' state.

Figure 2. Unfreezing the Status Quo in Lewin's Three-step Change model



Source : Kurt Lewin in Robbins et al. (1998), *Organisational Behaviour*, Prentice Hall Australia Pty. Ltd, P. 684.

Bridges' Organisational Transition

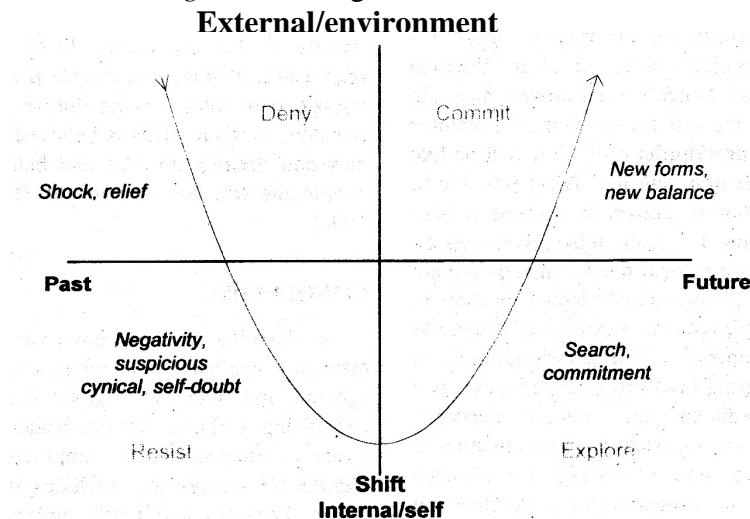
Bridges (1986) also has three stages on transitions that focus on the psychological process. He begins with the ending phases, which refer to "Letting go". This particular phase involves disengagement, disidentification, and disenchantment. For instance, having a new challenging position should give up a longer break time and other old culture, identity or behaviour used to be acquired. Second phase is the neutral zone that is categorised, psychologically by disorientation and disintegration. This phase is commonly unacceptable by most people because of the emptiness reason that must be filled with the right contents and must not fear being succumbed to. The last phase is the new beginning or "The Vision". Managers must be pro-active and be aware of this phase by providing compensations on the employees' losses, such as loss of turf, attachment, meaning, future, and control.

Change Grid Model

Scott and Jaffe (in Robbins et al., 1998) suggests a tool to examine emotional responds to change called Change Grid Model. It comprises four transition stages that are denial, resistance, exploration, and commitment stage (See Figure 3).

In the denial stage, individuals tend to show usual behaviour and ignore the change signals. They focus more on what they face at that moment. Cynicism may arise as questioning increases, therefore, complete information regarding the change should be provided. In the resistance stage, individuals demonstrate a self-doubt, anger, and frustration as the result of the change process. Cynicism may become criticism and grumbling as change starts influencing their status quo. Therefore, managers need to encourage employees to express their complaints and dissatisfactions. In the third stage, there is exploration. Individuals are now entering the future perspective where the curve begins to move up. They start to search and ready for commitment to the new state. Hence, clear vision and job descriptions are important. Creativity and positive thinking also emerge as the result of cooperation and improvement. Trial and error approach is still used so that a full understanding of mistakes is required. In the last stage, the commitment stage, individuals and groups begin to commit to the new state. A new or revitalised mission is created. It is also necessary to identify their present competencies and use them to define their gaps toward their specific goals.

Figure 3. Change Grid Model



Source : C. Scott and D. Jaffe in Robbins et al (1998), *Organisational Behaviour*, Prentice Hall Australia Pty Ltd, p. 680.

BECOMING AN EFFECTIVE CHANGE LEADER

The change approaches being explained previously need to be taken into action by effective change leaders. Under this situation where employees may contend with a greater risk and conflict, managers with special leadership characteristics are highly required. A good leader will be a good manager, however it does not always work the other way around. It is based on the theory where managers are dedicated to the maintenance of the existing organisation or focus on formal structures and systems, whereas leaders are often committed to its change (Beer et al., 1990; Tichy & Devanna, 1990). Hence, in order to attain the best result of every organisational change, a manager should be a leader. Oram and Wellins (1995) recommend some interesting qualifications for leaders of transformational change such as self evident visionary thinking, charismatic and reliability, ability to think divergently - well outside the square, attitude is at least as important as ability, leading in a participative way, active listening, and plenty more.

Carr et al. (1996) suggests several more specific key issues in order to become an effective change leader. First is embracing change when it is needed. Therefore, the readiness for change is prerequisite otherwise they will not gather support from the employee. The second is to develop a vision for change that is highlighting what has being mentioned earlier. According to Collins and Porras (1996), a vision refers to the company's core values and a core purpose that must remain fixed. It is also pointed out that without an appropriate vision, a transformation effort can result in confusing, incompatible and time-consuming projects with no clear direction (Kotter, 1996). Leaders must always maintain and translate the vision from words to pictures with a vivid description of what it will be like to achieve the goal and it is fairly possible to use a metaphor to deliver it. Having a high communication skill is the third recommended behaviour. Any critical need and requirement for change must be communicated in order to convince employees the necessity of change as well as to enhance a full understanding and feeling of getting involved in the process,, as a result of reducing the 'people barriers'. Leaders may initiate written communication to conveying the change message, for instance through regular newsletters, e-mail, Question & Answer database, and many more. These would not be effectively beneficial unless leaders provide feed back and try to

eliminate personal interests so that employees can freely express their opinion, complaint, and dissatisfaction. The fourth is to shake things up. This is to implicitly notify all people involved in the organisation that the status quo is about to be changed. For example by challenging traditional thinking as experienced by the Philip Electronic case. The CEO invited the senior managers and informed them of the opportunities as well as its consequences in their traditional environment. The fifth is to stay actively involved; walk the talk. Although managers have a great number of responsibilities, they must still actively involved in a diverse activity, such as chairing or participating in a steering committee. Walking the talk must be practised both at daily and long-term activities (Carr et al., 1996, p. 127) or in other word as a continuous involvement. Yet this activity can reduce employee's cynicism that may emerge during the change process. Finally, direct and review change management planning and implementation. Many factors are involved in the change process, as a result things may not work as expected. Therefore, a regular review needs to be conducted.

The last note to become good change leaders is that they must firstly deal with organisational roles that people play and then impose new roles, responsibilities, and relationships on them. This is believed will shape new and desired attitudes and behaviours on people and will last permanently (Beer, et al., 1990).

CONCLUSION

A changing business environment makes managers evaluate their organisation, management, and operation. To be successful in conducting a change action, leaders must be aware of enhancing their employees' preparedness for change that includes several key issues. They need to firstly understand what sort of change is all about. A change must be clearly defined and more importantly must be understood in conjunction with the learning process. The critical reality companies are facing today is their race with the speed of change itself. As an organisational change is closely related to the human aspects within the organisation, leaders must analyse the employee's reaction on change that involves their metaphor, resistance to change, psychological ownership, and cynicism and optimism. During the change process, workforces' behaviour can be examined using a number of psychological

transformation approaches and therefore will enable leaders to minimise the negative reactions and encourage the positive ones. Although all aspects have been taken into account, it will not result as expected unless effective change leaders are in charge. Leaders of organisational change are required to satisfy several key behaviours in order to prepare their organisations to keep them on the competitive edge while surviving.

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