

Design and Implementation of Communication Strategy in Change Management

Rahayu Mardikaningsih, Didit Darmawan

Sunan Giri University of Surabaya, Indonesia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 24 April 2022

Revised 15 May 2022

Accepted 30 June 2022

Key words:

Communication,
Change management,
Employee engagement,
Communication channels,
Leader,
Transparency,
Organization.

ABSTRACT

Change processes in organizations require clear and effective communication in order for changes to be well received and optimally implemented. This article reviews the importance of communication in change management, focusing on how organizations can design and implement effective communication to support on-going change. Proper communication helps reduce employee resistance, clarify the aim of the change, and improve their engagement in the change process. In its implementation, organizations need to pay attention to selecting appropriate communication channels, as well as ensuring two-way communication to make room for feedback. The role of the leader in conveying the change message in an inspiring and trust-building manner is crucial to create an atmosphere that supports the change. Through good communication, the change process in the organization can run smoothly, and organizational aims can be achieved more effectively and efficiently.

INTRODUCTION

In the world of modern organizations, change is an inevitable part. Every organization, whether large or small, often faces situations that require them to adapt to market needs, technology, and other internal dynamics. To deal with these changes, effective change management is needed for the organization to survive and develop. One of the key elements that determine the success of change management is a good communication strategy. Without proper communication, the desired change can fail due to the lack of understanding and engagement from all members of the organization (Abalo, 2019).

Along with the increasingly complex dynamics of the business world, organizations are beginning to realize that their success in making changes is largely determined by their ability to manage communication. Not just conveying information, but also creating a clear understanding and encouraging employee engagement in the change process. Communication strategy focuses not only on what is conveyed, but also how and to whom the message is conveyed, in order to produce maximum impact. While communication is considered one of the keys to success in change management, many organizations struggle to manage communication effectively during periods of change.

Some of the obstacles that are often faced are the lack of clarity in conveying the objectives of change, resistance from employees, and misalignment between communication by management and perceptions at the operational level (Ruissalo, 2015). It is important to explore how appropriate communication strategies can be implemented to facilitate change management in organizations.

One of the main problems that often arise in change management is the difficulty in building effective communication between management and employees. Without clear and transparent communication, employees will feel confused or even suspicious of the changes being made. This can lead to great resistance to change and hinder the implementation of new policies that the organization wants to implement. Many organizations are unsuccessful in managing change communication because they do not consider various factors that affect how information is received and understood by employees, such as cultural differences, communication styles, or levels of understanding (Škarica & Tanta, 2016).

One-way communication from management to employees is often not effective enough to create employee engagement in the change process. When employees feel disengaged in the change process,

* Corresponding author, email address: dr.diditdarmawan@gmail.com

they tend to feel undervalued and lose motivation to support the change (Sexton, 2014). It is crucial to design communication that allows for a two-way dialog, where employees can provide input and feel that their voices are heard. This will improve the sense of ownership towards the on-going change.

Many organizations overlook the importance of using the right communication tools to convey change messages. Communication that relies solely on physical meetings or correspondence is not sufficient in an increasingly dynamic world of work. Organizations need to leverage technology and various digital communication channels to ensure that change messages can be effectively delivered to all members of the organization. While communication technology is becoming more sophisticated, there are still shortcomings in its use that need to be considered so as not to reduce the effectiveness of communication itself (Malgas & Benedict, 2017).

An understanding of communication strategies in change management is essential to maintain organizational sustainability. Along with rapid developments in the business world and technology, an effective communication strategy will help organizations navigate change more smoothly and successfully (Schulz-Knappe et al., 2019). Today many organizations have to face the challenges of globalization and rapid changes in technology, which require them to adapt faster than ever. By understanding how proper communication can support change management, organizations will be able to create a more harmonious, productive, and adaptive work environment.

The aim of this study is to understand how organizations can design and implement effective communication strategies to support change management. The research will dig into the key elements of communication that can influence the success of change, as well as ways to overcome barriers that may arise in the process. Thus, it is hoped that this study can provide guidance for organizations to improve the effectiveness of change management through the implementation of appropriate communication strategies, which will further improve employee performance and engagement in the changes that occur.

RESEARCH METHOD

The literature study approach is a method used to analyze, examine, and summarize various relevant sources to gain insight into the topics discussed. In the dynamics of change management and communication strategies, the literature study serves to explore various theories and practices that have been implemented by various organizations.

This study can include different types of sources such as scientific articles, books, industry reports, and conference papers that provide an overview of communication approaches in the change process (Kotter, 1996). According to Armenakis and Bedeian (1999), existing literature often offers a variety of perspectives that can help organizations design better change communication, taking into account the challenges, techniques and approaches that have proven effective in the field.

It is important to note that the literature study not only relied on existing sources, but also critiqued how various existing findings could be implemented in different types of organizations. For example, research conducted by Lewis (2011) states that although various communication approaches have been implemented, there is still room for better customization depending on the culture of the organization, the type of change faced, and the structure of the organization itself. By conducting an analysis of the existing literature, we can identify patterns of communication that succeed or fail in change management and how communication strategies can be adjusted to be more relevant to specific organizational conditions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The process of change in organizations is often a big challenge, both for management and employees. One important element that can determine the success of such changes is effective communication. Clear, open, and timely communication is the key to supporting every step of change. Organizations that are successful in designing change communication strategies can create an environment conducive to employee receptiveness of change, reduce resistance, and improve the engagement of all team members (Fadzil et al., 2019). Communication is not only considered as a tool for conveying information, but also as a means to motivate, inspire, and support transformation in organizations.

It is important for organizations to convey the message of change and ensure that it is well received and understood by all parties. There is a need to select communication channels that suit the audience as well as two-way communication that allows employees to provide feedback. This approach helps create higher engagement and provides space for employees to ask their questions or concerns regarding the changes being implemented (Romadona & Setiawan, 2020).

In order to create successful change, organizational leaders also play an important role in conveying messages and modeling change themselves. As global and technological demands improve,

the challenges of managing change will continue to develop, and effective communication will continue to be an integral component of successful change management (Voica et al., 2022). Designing and implementing the right communication strategy is a crucial step that must be taken by every organization that is facing a change process.

Communicative strategies in organizations refer to systematic plans and approaches for managing internal and external communications within an entity. This strategy includes the ways in which information is conveyed, received, and processed within the organization, as well as how the organization interacts with outside stakeholders (Kunsch, 2018). The main aim of a communicative strategy is to ensure that messages are clear, consistent, and effective, so as to support the achievement of organizational aims, improve employee engagement, and building good relationships with customers and partners (Vaara & Langley, 2021).

An indication of the success of a communicative strategy can be measured through several factors. First, the level of employee engagement is one of the main indicators. If employees feel engaged and motivated, this indicates that communication within the organization is working well. Employee satisfaction and feedback surveys can provide insight into how well the communication strategy is received by team members. Secondly, communication effectiveness can be measured through the clarity and consistency of the messages delivered. If the messages received by employees and outside stakeholders are aligned with the aims and values of the organization, this indicates that the communicative strategy is successful (Ladonina, 2022).

The success of a communicative strategy can also be seen from the organization's ability to respond to changes and challenges. Organizations that have a good communication strategy will be faster and more effective in overcoming crises, managing conflicts, and adapting to environmental changes. Another important indicator is the improvement in relationships with stakeholders, which can be measured through the level of customer satisfaction, loyalty, and the organization's reputation in the market (Järventie-Thesleff et al., 2014). An effective communicative strategy not only contributes to good internal communication, but also strengthens the organization's position outside, creating an ecosystem that supports growth and sustainability.

Change management should be communicated through an effective strategy, which includes clear messaging, consistent updates, and the use of compelling stories. Key practices in change communication include sharing the vision, engaging

employees in the process, and keeping channels open for feedback to ensure understanding and support throughout the transition (Verghese, 2021).

It is important to tailor communication to the various audiences within the organization. This means identifying groups affected by the change, such as leaders, middle management and frontline employees, and tailoring messages to address their specific concerns and roles. Using a variety of communication channels, such as email, meetings, intranet updates and social media, is also critical to effectively reach all employees. This approach ensures that messages are accessible and suit a variety of learning styles (Durante, 2010).

Encouraging two-way communication is very important. Creating opportunities for employees to ask questions, provide feedback, and express concerns can be done through general meetings, surveys, or specialized forums, thus creating a sense of engagement and ownership in the change process (Goodman & Truss, 2004). Repeating key messages about the change, its benefits, and expected results on a regular basis also helps to maintain focus on the change and reduce uncertainty among employees. Celebrating small achievements throughout the change process can boost morale and encourage employee engagement (Škarica & Tanta, 2016). By implementing these strategies, organizations can improve their change management efforts, ensuring that employees feel informed, supported, and motivated to embrace the upcoming changes.

To design and implement an effective communication strategy in change management, organizations must recognize the importance of clear, open, and sustainable communication. The process of change in an organization, whether it is a change in structure, policy, or technology, requires careful communication planning so that all members of the organization can understand and support the change (Kotter, 1996). Poor communication is often one of the main reasons for failure in change management. An effective communication strategy should be designed to ensure that the information needed by stakeholders can be delivered in a timely manner, in a way that is easy to understand, and in a format that suits the needs of the audience.

One important principle in a change communication strategy is to ensure that the messages are consistent and tailored to different audiences within the organization. For example, top-level managers may require more strategic and macro information, while frontline employees need more operational information directly related to their daily work (Lewis, 2011). The selection of communication channels is also very important.

Organizations should choose the most effective medium for their audience, be it through face-to-face meetings, emails, webinars, or digital collaboration platforms. The determination of these channels should be done based on the audience's comfort level with technology as well as the conditions of change at hand.

In designing an effective communication strategy, it is important to engage leaders or managers in the change communication process. Leaders who are engaged in delivering change messages have a greater chance of strengthening team members' commitment and belief in the changes to be implemented (Armenakis & Harris, 2009). Leaders must be able to articulate the vision of change clearly and arouse the emotions of employees, so that they feel encouraged to support the change. This is in line with Kotter's (1996) findings that emphasize the importance of having a strong change leader to guide and inspire the entire organization during the transition.

An effective communication strategy should also take into account feedback from organizational members. Communication in change management is not one-way, but rather a two-way process that allows stakeholders to provide input, ask questions, and express their concerns. This feedback is important to ensure that the message has been well received and to identify potential barriers that need to be overcome before the change can proceed further (Kotter, 1996). To that end, organizations need to provide open channels of communication that allow employees to talk about their concerns, both formally and informally.

Effective communication in change management also engages using narratives or stories to explain the change. Narratives help create an emotional connection between the on-going change and individuals in the organization. According to Denning (2005), using stories to describe the benefits and aims of change can make the change more relevant and easily received. Stories told in an engaging way can help employees feel that they are part of the change, thus strengthening their engagement.

Once a communication plan is in place, the organization needs to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of that communication during the change process on-going. Evaluation can be done in a variety of ways, including employee surveys, stakeholder interviews, or through analyzing operational results related to the change (Kotter, 1996). This process helps the organization assess whether the communication has been successful in building the understanding and support needed to support the desired change. Based on the evaluation results, the communication strategy can be adjusted to address any shortcomings.

Another challenge organizations face in designing a change communication strategy is resistance to change itself. Employees may feel anxious or unsure about the ongoing changes, especially if the change impacts their job or role. Organizations need to design messages that can reduce this anxiety by providing clear information regarding the reasons for change and its long-term benefits (Kotter, 1996). Transparent and honest communication can help overcome fear of change and build trust among employees.

One step to consider is the development of communication skills for managers and leaders in the organization. They should be trained to be effective communicators, so that they can deliver change messages in a persuasive, clear and empathetic manner. According to Allen et al. (2007), communication training for leaders will strengthen their ability to influence and motivate team members during times of change. By having good communication skills, leaders will find it easier to bridge the inequality between management and employees, thus improving the success of the change.

Besides to communication skills, organizations must also pay more attention to digital communication in this modern era. Digital communication platforms such as email, instant messaging applications, and project management systems have become important means of disseminating information during the change process. Organizations should ensure that the digital communication tools used are effective, easily accessible to all employees, and support smooth collaboration (Lewis, 2011). It is also important to be mindful of technological challenges that some employees may face, such as difficulties in accessing or using certain communication tools.

In order for change to be successfully implemented, organizations must also pay attention to the cultural aspects of change communication. Organizational culture can influence the way employees receive and interact with change messages. Organizations with a culture that is open to innovation may be more receptive to change, while organizations with a more hierarchical or conservative culture may require a more cautious and gradual approach to delivering change (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999). It is important to design a communication strategy that considers the specific culture of the organization in order for the change to be well received.

Communication in change management must also be executed on a sustainably. Not only in the early stages of change, but communication should be carried out throughout the change process to maintain momentum and ensure that each step of change is made clear.

A sustainable communication approach can help reduce confusion and keep employees engaged in the long term (Kotter, 1996). This process allows the organization to maintain transparency and address issues that arise throughout the change.

Ending the change communication process by celebrating achievements is also important to strengthen commitment to the change. According to Kotter (1996), celebrating successes in the change process can provide positive encouragement to employees and motivate them to continue adapting. Recognition of individual and team achievements during change provides a sense of achievement that can strengthen their engagement and dedication to organizational aims.

By designing and implementing an effective communication strategy, organizations can improve their chances of success in change management. Clear, consistent and two-way communication will build trust and support employees in coping with the change. Leader engagement and the use of a strong narrative can accelerate the change process and minimize resistance from employees (Nyagah, 2017). Communication should be an integral part of every change management step taken by the organization.

Having understood how an effective communication strategy can influence the success of change management, it is important to emphasize that communication implementation is not an easy task. The success of organizational change depends on how communication is structured, delivered, and received by employees. Without proper communication, the desired change will be difficult to achieve (Nordvang et al., 2009). It is important for organizations to always adapting and repairing their communication strategies according to the developing situation and conditions.

Successful change communication requires long-term commitment from all stakeholders in the organization. A clear and comprehensive communication strategy helps organizations overcome resistance and achieve change objectives effectively. (Lauer, 2021). It is important to sustainably evaluate the effectiveness of the communication implemented and make adjustments when needed. Through a systematic and sustainable approach, organizations will be able to create a supportive environment and encourage employees to play an active role in every stage of change.

Ultimately, communication in change management is not just a means of conveying information, but also a mechanism to strengthen the bond between management and employees. Effective communication facilitates smoother change adoption and enhances employee engagement. The right communication strategy can be the key to success in creating positive and sustainable change in the organization.

CONCLUSION

Effective communication plays a very important role in supporting the success of change processes in organizations. Successful change management depends on how the change message is communicated to all elements of the organization. Open, clear and timely communication helps reduce uncertainty, improve employee engagement and accelerate the change adoption process. For effective communication, it is important for organizations to design communication channels that suit different audiences and allow for two-way interaction. Organizational leaders also have a huge responsibility in ensuring that communication is not just one-way but also provides space for employees to provide feedback and ask questions about the change process.

Based on this, organizations should continue to evaluate and adjust the communication strategies implemented to ensure that change information can be well received by employees. Training to improve communication skills for managers and organizational leaders is also needed. Using communication technology that is efficient and transparent will further expedite the course of change. A well-planned communication will result in mutual agreement and understanding, thus supporting the successful implementation of change and achieving organizational aims.

REFERENCES

- Abalo, E. (2019). *Management of Change*. Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Allen, M. W., Jimmieson, N. L., & Bordia, P. (2007). Employee Reactions to Corporate Downsizing: A Meta-Analytic Investigation of the Role of Organizational Justice. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92(3), 548-559.
- Armenakis, A. A., & Bedeian, A. G. (1999). Organizational Change: A Review of Theory and Research in the 1990s. *Journal of Management*, 25(3), 293-315.
- Durante, L. (2010). A Study of Internal Change Communication Practices: Message, Media, Channel and Approach. *Theses*, University of Missouri.
- Fadzil, A. S., Hassan, R., Syed Mohamad, S. J. A. N., Zainudin, M. I., & Ali, A. A. E. R. (2019). Towards a Successful Organizational Change: The Role of Dialogic Communication. *International Journal of Asian Social Science*, 9(1), 86-95.

- Fared, M. A. & D. Darmawan. (2021). Design and Implementation of Cross-Functional Training to Improve Team Collaboration, *Journal of Social Science Studies*, 1(1), 215 – 220.
- Goodman, J., & Truss, C. (2004). The Medium and the Message: Communicating Effectively During a Major Change Initiative. *Journal of Change Management*, 4(3), 217-228.
- Hariani, M., & R. Mardikaningsih. (2021). Implementation of Value-Based Management in Multinational Organizations Facing Cultural Differences, *Journal of Social Science Studies*, 1(1), 67 – 72.
- Hasanaj, R. (2017). Importance of Communication During Change: A Case of the Municipality of Vlora. *European Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, 2(1), 15-19.
- Hiatt, J. M. (2006). *ADKAR: A Model for Change in Business, Government, and Our Community*. Prosci.
- Järventie-Thesleff, R., Moisander, J., & Villi, M. (2014). Strategic Communication During Change. In *the Routledge Handbook of Strategic Communication*. Routledge.
- Kotter, J. P. (1996). *Leading Change*. Harvard Business Press.
- Kunsch, K. M. M. (2018). A Comunicação Estratégica Nas Organizações Contemporâneas. *Coimbra University Press*, 18(33), 13-24.
- Ladonina, N. A. (2022). *Communicative Strategy as an Actualization Tool of the Communicative and Pragmatic Discourse Potential*. General Question of World Science.
- Lauer, T. (2021). Communication as a Success Factor: Avoiding and Overcoming Resistance. *Change Management: Fundamentals and Success Factors*. Springer.
- Lewis, L. K. (2011). *Organizational Change: Creating Change Through Strategic Communication*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Malgas, R., & Benedict, O. H. (2017). Communication of Change Management: Variation Based on Recipients' Position in the Organization: A Case Study. *Journal of Communication*, 8(1), 69-76.
- Nordvang, A. D., Rolland, D., & Simpson, K. (2009). Organisational Change Management Through Effective Internal Communication. *International Journal of Information Systems and Change Management*, 3(3), 220-245.
- Nyagah, E. F. W. (2017). Effective Communication as a Change Management Tool in Creating Awareness on Leadership Vision and Strategy: A Focus on Management of Student Academic Records at Institutions of Higher Learning. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 8(6), 11-18.
- Romadona, M. R., & Setiawan, S. (2020). Communication of Organizations in Organizations Change's Phenomenon in Research and Development Institution. *Jurnal Pekommas*, 5(1), 91-104.
- Ruissalo, M. (2015). Communication as Change Management Vehicle: How to Improve Change Receptivity with Organisational Communications. *Master's Thesis*, Tampere University of Applied Sciences.
- Schulz-Knappe, C., Koch, T., & Beckert, J. (2019). The Importance of Communicating Change: Identifying Predictors for Support and Resistance Toward Organizational Change Processes. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 24(4), 670-685.
- Sexton, S. (2014). The Use of Organisational Communication to Facilitate the Implementation of Change by Reducing Employee Resistance. *Doctoral Dissertation*, National College of Ireland.
- Škarica, J., & Tanta, I. (2016). Communication in Organisations as Fundamentals of Good Management or a Stumbling Block. *Communication Management Review*, 1(2), 78-93.
- Škarica, J., & Tanta, I. (2016). Communication in Organisations as Fundamentals of Good Management or a Stumbling Block. *Communication Management Review*, 1(2), 78-93.
- Vaara, E., & Langlely, A. (2021). Communicative Perspectives on Strategic Organization. *Strategic Organization*, 19(4), 541-552.
- Verghese, A. K. (2021). Strategic Change Communication. *Current Trends and Issues in Internal Communication: Theory and Practice*. Springer.
- Voica, O. M., Veith, C., & Isbaita, I. (2022). *Aspects of Organizational Communication Influencing the Success of Change*. Proceedings of the International Management Conference.