LEADERSHIP ROLE IN HANDLING EMPLOYEE’S RESISTANCE: IMPLEMENTATION OF INNOVATION

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ABSTRACT

The research has an objective, to view an organization and the management to be more objective and receptive in innovation and meeting the ever aggressive and turmoil of today’s growing economy and the significant changes it brings. The impact of economy is a “tsunami”, it is unpredictable. It has lead to an uncertainty and dynamic changes in an organization. Innovation has affected globally in heart of many organization in terms of creativity and implementation ended up subordinates need to nourish their knowledge and skills equivalent to fast pace of innovation. Creative endeavor requires risk taking by subordinates in experimenting innovative instruments and gadgets. Nature of innovation has put the subordinates in an environment of change and resistance in the organization. Hence, effectiveness and efficiency of an organization require a leader who grasps innovative perspective in all angle of the world. Leaders need to acquire a strong sense of direction in leading the subordinate to the destination in the future where driven by innovation. In this paper, we investigate the influence of leadership in building and transforming innovative capabilities in organizations bearing in mind the resistance that could affect the organizational goals.

Keywords: Change, Leadership, Innovation, Innovative Capabilities and Resistance

1.0 Introduction

For many years, technology has supplanting people in the performance of many routine jobs and has increasingly assumed prominence in more sophisticated processes. The universal availability of inexpensive technology has
created a highly competitive global marketplace and fueled the growth of robust, knowledge-based economies in developing countries, with India and China as the prime examples. Developed countries such as the United States can no longer claim a competitive advantage based on exclusive access to advanced technology and a well-trained workforce.

As the global playing field becomes increasingly level, many business forecasters are predicting that workforce creativity and innovation will be the most important factors in establishing and maintaining a competitive advantage. Leading strategic thinkers across sectors are moving beyond a narrow definition of innovation to pioneer innovations in not just products but also services, consumer experiences, operational processes, distribution, value chains, policies, business models, and even the functions of management and how people work.

Organization is all about organizing people under one ceiling for a good purpose, leading them towards the future by adopting specific strategies. The strategies that are created are need to commensurate with the rapid change of global in order to break through the norms of the business. Nourishment of creativity and innovations are vital goal for many businesses success by determining how fast the organizations adapt to change. Innovation and change has its impact in an organization especially the leadership and management. This paper, however will explore the relationships among the key components in change innovation and its leadership. Leadership and innovation are widely linked to the success of change innovation. Kotter (1998) stated, ‘only through leadership can one truly develop and nurture culture that is adaptive to change. Leadership and change were further discussed the importance by Ostroff, Kinicki and Tamkins (2003) that leadership as an emergent process that acts on both organizational climate and culture. Change innovation refers to the introduction of new product or any changes of the current product, the process, structure, system or culture into an organization.

Charismatic leaders are not born, but developed through never ending process of self-study, education, training and experience. At the same time good leaders could handle all situations which happen in organization in very effective way. All situations are unique and varied by different reasons. Employee’s resistance is one of the situations which leaders have been faced in industry nowadays. Leaders have to use their judgment to decide the best course of action and leadership style to confront employees so called resistant. The leaders of the organization role shines when they plan the direction based on the strategies in achieving lengthy term goals with limited resources available because evaluating created strategies is equally important as managing a business. The leader is responsible to assess his or her resourceful environment and goals of the organization to determine the strategies that are appropriate, after which he should communicate these strategies to his subordinates.

Innovation is equated with change. Change is happening all the time whether we’re aware of it or not. What one can observe and do in the context of a novel occurrence or insight might very well lead to innovation. For example, people might have had ‘big ideas’ from time to time and done nothing about them only to notice someday that someone has succeeded in bringing about exactly what was imagined. This is what that might distinguish a leader/innovator from ordinary people. A more powerful way to think of innovation is that it means to intentionally
‘bringing into existence’ something new that can be sustained and repeated and which has some value or utility. By far the most common question of innovation is the “receptive” of innovation and the needs to become much more innovative. These questions are invariably followed by resistance in which the true objective of change/innovation is “questionable”. If organizations can boost their "return on innovation" by investing more in good implementations rather than merely focusing on the innovation results, then that’s where their efforts and focus should go. Changes are needed in term of process, organizational structure, management and so on. Thus, millions of money has been spent acquiring and improving technologies, yet leaders are never fully institutionalized within an organization. Resistance occurs when new technology becomes significant stuff in organization and gives negative impact to the employees. Resistance happens when leaders introduced new things for the organization and abandon the traditional way of doing things. Basically people might see what are the benefits gained from the innovation or new technology and ignored the negative impact to employees.

When speaking about leadership or innovation, the concern is about accomplishing some sustainable change whether large or small, continuous or breakthrough. Innovation takes place at different levels from modest improvements on an existing product or process to dramatic and even historically significant breakthroughs in how we relate to the world. In all cases, the capacity to innovate will be a function of commitments, what is to accomplish and circumstances people perceive to be in. If we are resisting, we see no innovation and whatever change we generate will be as a reaction to the circumstances and part of the process by which those circumstances persist. When people react positively, they are in a position to innovate and will do so with enthusiasm that could commemorate with leaders who understand the need for such changes. At every stage of trying to impose innovation, leadership does indeed affect the outcome as tenacity to pursue such efforts could make or break an organization.

2.0 Resistance

Businesses growth in an organization are competitive and demanding as many organization along with the challenges and resistance they faced in introduction to innovation. Zeithaml et al,(2009) further commented that front line employees known as interfunctional in implementing innovation in service industry. Arguably it is complex because service innovation causes great impact on employees roles requiring changes in behaviour which suits the customers preferences. Therefore, employees task here is to facilitate what customer wants not what employees prefer to innovate. According to the process theory, the development of innovation can be studied as it is transformed and implement as a concrete reality within the dynamics of the organization,(Huber & Van de Ven, 1995). In view of this theory, it can be said that innovation of thoughts and minds evolves in the innovation itself in which the acceptance and resistance of innovation can be examined.

Buckley (2002) calls later adopters (careerists who are motivated primarily by career advancement and rewards), and resistors (a small group who are suspicious or fearful of change). Other faculty categories are lone rangers
innovators who embrace instructional technology and education) and early adopters (more hesitant innovators who tend to avoid risk). Because early adopters fear making mistakes, they may form the large part of what Heifetz and Linsky (2008) identify as uncommitted people in the middle, wary of change, who "have a stake in the comfort, stability, and security of the status quo". This group will most likely have the largest population in an organization, and their support will be essential to the success of any leader's plans. Hence, leaders reach out to resisters, they must also connect with those who are committed to finding new ways and doing what it takes to make those visions reality.

Resistance affects the speed at which an innovation is adopted. It affects the feelings and opinions of employees at all stages of the adoption process. It affects productivity, quality, and relationships. Resistance to change can intensify if employees feel that they have been involved in a series of changes that have had insufficient support to gain the anticipated results. In today’s turbulent times mastering innovation is a competitive necessity because this phenomenon contributes tremendous impact on organization and businesses. Hence, to make the innovation visible, the management needs to set a platform to accommodate the changes in the atmosphere so that the management can keep abreast on innovation and the resistance with a competitive advantage.

3.0 Leadership and managing emotions

Beyond who the leader is, much more studies have been explored to determine what a leader does to overcome the resistance from employees. In fact, the facilitation of organizational change is considered among the most common outcome of leadership behaviors (Bass & Bass, 2008, Kottler, 1990). According to Conger & Kanunago, (1998); Shamir, House, & Arthur, (1993) mentioned that through the use of information they gather from external stakeholders, transformational leaders help reframe followers’ perception of change to view it as opportunity rather than threat. Zoller and Fairhurst (2007) have added that leaders should able effectively manage emotions including physical and material expression suggest complete political skills. The emotions of change among the employees are very strong. Loss, anger and fear are among the emotions gone through by employees as a sign of resistance. When innovation and change are implemented will lead to continuous learning opportunity, in which this learning contains these emotions. One key is to recognize what resistance really is at stake: are the employees threatened with a loss of value or with a loss of a “rare strategic value” of an employee? Can our risk in innovating be analyzed for action or are we paralyzing ourselves with self-fulfilling mind process? Thus, leader’s behaviors and approaches in successfully managing employees’ emotions could determine the success of innovation process or organizational success in changes. Transformational leaders are therefore expected to positively impact their followers reaction to organizational change (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Groves, 2005).

The importance of external environment in shaping the search behavior are complicated because the search activities of different firms in an industry are subject to considerable variety of product determined by different managerial choices on organizing the development of new products. According to Shane (2003) future expectations as
perceived by managers may differ when facing same set of employees. It is difficult for many organizations to
determine the optimal organizing level in terms of being innovative especially in situations where there is conflict in
the knowledge base of the firm.(levinthal and March, 1993).

Leaders have difficulty in managing resistance is because of the employees’ attitude which don’t want to adapt new
things in organizational. In fact, close minded people which are the group would like to use traditional ways instead
of using effective ways. It is further discuss by Ehrlich and Lees’s (1969) that differentiated among close-minded
persons who resist changing their old previously learned beliefs and open minded persons who are eager to learn
new things and are willing to accept major changes of the self.

Change is associated with a fear of losing control and from concerns about the person’s ability to cope with a new
situation (Oreg, 2003). He also added that employees become anxious about change because they think that they
will have to compromise their job security that can threaten their power and prestige (Oreg, 2003). In view of this
most of the employees are rejecting and refusing to adapt the change to save their position or job in organizational.
In an organizational system, technological advancement, systems, or product change will include streamlining,
working smarter, cost reduction, efficiency, and faster turnaround times. Some of workers feel that the changes
might eliminate the necessary of job, while others having doubts of their own skills and capabilities in the new
environment. Resistant view it is has a bad impact to them personally.

The feeling of fear is a barrier for employee understanding and inability work within new environment. Change
affects certain groups. For one, it will affect the Gen X employees. They have been doing things according to the
past perspectives that have no room for technology and flexibility. Such rigid situations are being broken down by
embracing change. The feel of being left out or more probably neglected is so high they do not want such changes
that will affect their lives in motion. Lapointe and Rivard 2005, Markus 1983 further mentioned that users have
been said to resist using new technology when they fear that it might potentially decrease their power. Employees
fear that they could not adapt to the environment and it might meet failures. They also feel that could not make the
transition very well in new working environment. Resisting employees who have already made up their minds that
the change won’t work or who are reluctant to learn something new will impede the organization’s growth and
adaptation to change. Frankly, they also hinder their own personal growth and development. Many companies make
the serious mistake of not insisting on a very thorough training program that will insure the employees have the
knowledge and a confidence level of adapting and using the new system to the maximum benefit of the
organization.

4.0 Leadership’s Roles in handling resistance.

As we discussed earlier, leader is the person who guiding the organization through organizational change. In our
research, we emphasize more on leaders’ role in shaping employees intentions to resist the innovation in
organizational. In other words, leaders’ behaviors are determining the success of an organization in adapting the changes or innovations. Such conclusions are especially relevant for leaders of organizations whose characteristics and actions are reflected in organizational processes and outcomes (Berson, Oreg, & Dvir, 2008, Hambrick & Mason, 1984). According to Yukl 2010, Michigan and Ohio Stae research groups, Bowers & Bowers & Seashore 1996, Fleishman 1953, stated that the roles of leaders’ personal attributes and behaviors are shaping organizational outcomes.

Leaders’ personal attributes influence the choices and the decisions they make in the organization (Carpenter, Geletkanycz, & Sanders, 2004; Hambrick & Mason, 1984), and, in turn, these decisions influence followers’ attitudes and beliefs (Berson et al., 2008; Schein, 1992; Schneider, 1987). Employees won’t resist the innovations if the leader directs the employees in the right path. For example leaders attitudes such as positive thinking and willing to take risk would likely will bring the organizational make decisions in positive manner as well as taking risk. Here organizational meant by the staffs who working in organizational.

According to Avolio, Zhu, Koh & Bhatia,(2004) stated that the leaders decision and behaviors might influence on followers’ beliefs and attitudes. Indeed, leaders must win the employees beliefs and mind in order to manage the innovation and avoid the resistance. Yet the leaders have to make the employees clearly understand the vision and objective of changes. This is often done through the formation of the organizational culture (Schein, 1992) and climate (Schneider, 1987), both of which involve organizationally shared beliefs.

Resistance of employees in organization can be viewed as an organization commitment based on the shared common goals and vision. It is further added that by Gill, Levine and Pitt 1999 that resistance of workers in organization and at best their compliance, to command and control and perhaps to shift the emphasis from management to leadership. In view of this an employee resistance conflict between personal needs and organization needs can be handle by the leaders by understanding the “individual needs” as Bass and Avolio 1994 called it “individualized consideration” in which leaders should able to distinguish the needs of employee which is conflicting with organization goal and able to feedback to the employee on the consideration needs. Gill, Levine and Pitt 1999 have further supported that empowerment consideration is largely characterized by such behaviors, which lead to a desire among employees and leaders to improve and develop themselves. Therefore as a leader understanding the individual needs of an employee and demonstrating the solution to the needs conflict will able to reduce and eliminate the resistance. For instance, an employee whose desires to grow in term of career will source an opportunity in self development in which the employee expecting organization to provide training and development. In leadership and resistance, we focus on the roles and responsibilities. It is important that we are able to distinguish leadership and from management in which the focus will bring attention to the leaders potential among all relevant members in an organization. Zoller and Fairhurst 2007 further supported that resistance and leadership can help us to understand mobilization process, particularly the ways in which covert and individual forms of resistance.
Change is unpleasant for many people, and they are apt to react with resistance. Change often threatens our "comfort zones"—those predictable daily routines we like to control. Change brings with it some degree of uncertainty, and it can leave us with less control over a situation. Really, it takes a secure person, a leader, to try something new. A certain kind of risk-taking is needed to lead change, and some people want no part of exploring the unknown. Leaders need to set the right examples. Employees have been in unfamiliar situations where they are not sure how to act; feel awkward and uncomfortable. They look for someone to give them direction, to help increase their sense of control in the situation. But without leaders, and adequate tools to cope with change, employees might retreat or withdraw from the situation or even actively resist the change. To overcome resistance leaders need to teach people tools or skills to handle change, and support those employees who set the right examples for others to follow. But in reality, this doesn't always happen. Instead, managers too often try to identify and discipline resisters.

Managing the fear of change is a top priority for high-performing leaders, who know that “greatness” requires making deep organizational and personal changes. Therefore Guttman (2008) further added it will creates a secured environment of belonging that employees are needed to spearhead changes even with changes to top management. People can only deal with so many changes before they go into “Future Shock.” One way to keep Future Shock from undermining your efforts to implement change is to make sure that people have sufficient time to understand and absorb the upcoming move to the high-performance model and to give them plenty of opportunity to ask questions.

There are several variables pointed out by Paul and Elder (2002) for instance narrow minded which subdivided into limited education, innate sociocentrism, natural deception and intellectual arrogance contributes to resistant to change. Therefore, a leader needs to absorb such mindsets by collaborating and also foster teamwork in the organization. Clark & Gottfredson (2009) further agrees that trying to innovate with combination of group of well versed in knowledge of technology with outdated learning mindsets will enhance to create dynamic environments.

According to Kelli McBride(2011), resistance to technology in higher education are overwhelming and intolerance level among the employees. In today’s lightening fast world, learning agility atmosphere required with assistance by a visionary leader. In this article, instructional designer carries the qualities of leadership who transforms the higher education into learning and adapts to change to innovation approach A leader needs to be precise what employees want and to create a positive change on widespread, a leader must select proper attitude for effective interpersonal interaction. Sample (2008), warns that naysayers are negative influencers and believe that their brainstorming ideas would assist to achieve solutions however it is resisting to changes and hindrance creative thinking which heads to innovation. The author explains that leadership roles are in limbo because the employees prefer to stay in comfort zone perhaps isolating themselves from working via web or maintaining their status from the time hired because of fragile requirements by the higher education from employees. Even the leadership role concrete and appropriate but because in past there are certain incidence such as broken promises, lack of communication and poor respect for employees lead to chances of faking compliance in truly incorporating new technology to a optimum level. Besides,
there are other faculty questions the validity in adding technology in their style of teaching because of clinging to
traditional ways of delivery mode and unwillingness effort on handling technologically innovated equipments. The
leaders need to be articulate in identifying weaknesses and strength and also work along to overcome those
weaknesses. In order to successfully make this transition, and provide the best education opportunities and
environments for students, higher education organizations must provide leadership that understands the campus
culture, helps faculty connect to this new environment by matching needs to new methods, and manage resistance
by providing positive and authentic motivation to change rather than not a mandated burden that resistant teachers
will either refuse to a greater acceptance of technologically innovation environment. Without this leadership,
campuses will waste time, money, and resources.

5.0 Recommendation

In relation to the Malaysian government towards becoming high income nation by 2020, private sectors hand over
their brains combining government’s funds in formulating and operating projects for the benefit of the people in
major economic growth sectors. For example, agriculture based companies operating within Northern Corridor
Economic Region (NCER) will benefit from these development funds. More operation system are being altered to
accommodate technological changes as participation of private and government would bring innovative solutions
for higher yield. The smartest thing innovation practioners either from the government or private sector could do is
collaborate their aims in which able them to boost their chances of success by investing less time brainstorming and
more thought targeting the sources of resistance to innovation implementation. Innovation initiatives should have
explicit flowcharts and tactics explaining how internal resistance will be identified and reduced.
Overcoming resistance and change should be the driving dynamic for implementing innovations in enterprise. In
view of this it is important that innovation “mind set” exposed are to early stage of an employees, Therefore it is
vital that the workforce are exposed at early stage of schooling of innovation and change. It is further echoed by
Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, Datuk Muhiyuddin Yassin, that creativity and innovation should begin during
schooling period not when they reach the corporate world. This clearly indicating, the pipeline of leadership starts
not only as a manager perhaps from the school teacher until reaches the headmaster who acts as mentors and
coaches for younger generations, helping them develop the skills necessary to lead large businesses and
organizations in future. Scott (2003) further supported that teachers are the leading agents of change on a campus
because they are the final arbiters of whether or not a great sounding change idea is actually put into practice in a
way that works for student.

The emergence of new generation of employees has heightened the level of development of skills application and
performance in organization. Many countries are witnessing the changes and expectations of employees which are
above the par. This argues whether the organizations has ability to allocate framework or resources since these
employees prefer an environment which spacious for creativity, innovation and the flowering of their skills and
talents.
6.0 Conclusion

The best insights into innovation cultures don’t come from the quantity and quality of its ideas but in the nature of the resistance to their successful implementation. Management of an organization plays an important role in grasping the essence of an innovation culture must be at its best. Simply executing the innovation ideas does not in any means helps the success of change but it leads to strong resistance. Whenever changes happened and the management suggested or propose for action plan you’ll find the culture of “over the meal talk that” I don’t like that...”. Whatever reasons, excuses and evasions employee use to explain away changes can’t be implemented is the organization’s resistance to innovation culture. Consequently, the innovation is the challenge of diagnosing and overcoming organizational resistance in determining whether the employees are better resources for the innovation proposal. Meanwhile, managing resistance to change is challenging. Resistance to change can be covert or overt, organized or individual. Employees can realize that they don't like or want a change and resist publicly and verbally. They can just feel uncomfortable and resist, sometimes unknowingly, through the actions they take, the words they use to describe the change, and the stories and conversations they share in the workplace. Resistance is intensified because, not only do you need to gain support for the current change, which employees may or may not see in their best interests, you need to justify the former change and the need to change yet again. Finally, our research highlights the needs to recognize the leadership role in which the combination of innovation, change and resistance has intensified in achieving the organization goals and future direction.
References


