Change Motivation vs. Resistance

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There are many factors that affect an organization’s ability to implement meaningful change. Regardless of the approach to change being implemented, there are factors that either motivate change or cause resistance to change. This paper identifies and summarizes the differences between these factors and examines the relationship they have to national and global influences on the organization.

Change

Change is a part of every organization. In order of companies to grow and prosper they must become adept at managing change. Leadership must be knowledgeable about the various approaches to change and aware of the factors that motivate or inspire change and factors that cause resistance to change efforts.

According to Spector (2013), there are three broad categories that the various approaches to change fall into, (1) turnaround, (2) tools and techniques, and (3) transformation. Regardless of the approach to the change effort, motivators and resistance exists.

Approaches to Change

The motivation that drives the turnaround change approach is the organization’s need to manage assets in a “new way in order to stabilize cash flow” (Spector, 2013, p.5). Turnaround involves selling or acquiring assets to better position the company in the world or national markets. While the motivation for turnaround is not behavioral, turnaround efforts can result in resistance behavior among employees. Employees may become insecure due to the changes and exhibit behavior indicative of feeling threatened by the changes. Some employees may fear that their jobs are in jeopardy. Management must be careful when communicating the changes in
order to allay the fears of employees. Unaddressed, this resistance can create issues areas such as quality and productivity.

The tools and techniques approach focuses on “organizational processes, mechanics and other interactions intended to produce a product of service” (Spector, 2013, p.6). The motivation driving this approach stems from the need to improve some system or process within the organization. The goal of this approach is to improve efficiencies and enhanced productivity. There are many tools that are used to facilitate these changes and may involve the introduction of new technology. Many times the efforts to increase the internal efficiencies of an organization meet resistance among workers. Often the resistance is connected to a “misunderstanding about the need for change” (Torben, 2011, p.1). When new technology is involved, resistance may come from a fear that the individual lacks the skills needed to use the new tool. According to Spector, 2013, attending to techniques and tools without also paying attention to employee behavior is a formula for disappointment and dysfunction.

The third approach, transformation, targets behavior and is motivated by the organizations need to enhance worker competences. An example of transformation would be a company that wants to streamline the decision making process. This would require employees who are accustom to taking order to begin making decisions on their own. These behavioral changes are ripe for resistance.

Motivation and Resistance

Spector (2013) defines motivation as the “degree to which employees are committed to the achievement of outstanding performance both for themselves and their company” (Spector, 2013, p. 8). The first thing to remember is that people do not respond to change in the same way. The employee’s level of motivation or resistance greatly depends on the way in which change is
implemented. Organizational leaders must be attentive to employee perceptions and reaction when implementing change of any kind. Staff member reaction to change ranges from “commitment, at one end of the spectrum to aggressive resistance on the other end” (Spector, 2013, p. 10).

Employees may resist change due to low trust in the ability of management to properly handle the change. They may also resist because they are satisfied with the status quo. Whatever the reason for resistance, it must be addressed for the change effort to succeed.

Change in a company is generally precipitated by some trigger event such as a downturn in the national economy or the organization going global. These events affect employee levels of commitment or resistance. Resistance is generally precipitated by fear. Motivation is precipitated by a feeling of security and commitment to the ultimate goal.

Conclusion

Regardless of the change being implemented in an organization the behavior of staff must be considered and addressed. The key to overcoming resistance is communication and involvement. By communication early with staff and by involving them in the implementation of the change effort an organization can go a long way to reducing resistance. Communication and involvement can become great motivators for acceptance and change effort success.
References
