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Harvard Referencing shall apply.

Applied Project Business Studies

Competencies for effective leadership through organizational change in the Catering industry

Presented by: Sara Edna Muñoz Terán

This research project is presented as part of the requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Arts Honours in International Business
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Abstract

Recent research and their results indicate that a significant number of organisational change initiatives fail due to several reasons, however it has been discussed and brought to the spotlight that resistance from people is one of the main reasons. Although this topic has drawn more attention in recent years as a subject of study and theory development, this phenomenon has not received sufficient attention from researchers. Therefore, the present study aimed to investigate the impact of the leadership role in relation to organisational change in driving successful implementations.

A qualitative research method through semi-structured interviews was undertaken for data collection on the development of this study with an inductive approach and thematic coding data analysis.

As expected, results found evidence that leaders are key in guiding people and promoting the adequate environment and work conditions to achieve the desired results. What is more, the study reinforced the importance of involving employees and considering them as part of the strategy and not as an isolated factor. Meaning that their participation can be the differentiator for success and leaders are the driving force behind them to make this possible. Therefore the significance of leaders to count with the necessary competencies and skills to manage change and lead successful implementations.

List of Acronyms:

1. ADKAR: Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability and Reinforcement
2. CCL: Center for Creative Leadership
3. CMI: Change Management Insight

List of Tables:

1. Table of stakeholders interviewed for the study
2. Table of thematic coding analysis

List of Diagrams:

1. The Process of Transition, John Fisher, 2012.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

One of the biggest challenges that organisations are currently facing in the modern ever-changing world is organisational change. Change is strategically essential for firms to grow and remain current in the market. Without being able to do things differently, companies are unlikely to succeed or last for long. Nevertheless, this dynamic situation has brought its opportunities and challenges for all involved, individuals and organisations.

According to statistics, 70% of organisational changes fail, and only one third of major change strategies meet their goals. Furthermore only 27% of employees agree that the leadership team is trained to lead and manage change. While 74% of leaders say they involved employees in creating a change strategy, only 42% of employees feel included. (Ruff, J. 2025)

As a result of these changes, employees are often overloaded with challenges and uncertainty which conducts to high stress levels and consequently, this may trigger different behaviours in employees, mostly negative ending in resistance to change which could lead to undesirable results such as decrease in productivity if the leaders do not know how to manage the situation and possess the necessary skills to do so. (Bordia et al., 2004)

Thus, when implementing change, it is important to understand for organisations and leaders that people react to it in many different ways, while for some it could be easy to adapt, for others may represent a greater challenge and it is part of the leadership competencies to help and make transitions smoother for employees.

Hence, the leadership role is key to ensure that changes within the organisation are effectively applied. In my experience, working as supervisor in the catering industry in Ireland, organisational changes have been implemented but not managed in the best way. Just to mention, some of the issues are that managers do not involved the whole team in the process and fail to communicate effectively with the staff to have a clear understanding of the strategy, for instance what the business is aiming, that is to say, why the change is needed and what role each member is playing in the implementation.

1.2 Rationale for the study

Since change is a constant normally in every organisation it is certain that most individuals will encounter this situation at some stage, more than once during their life careers. As mentioned above, it has been demonstrated that frequently organisational change initiatives fail more often than they succeed despite all the resources put into creating change management plans and processes (Center for Creative Leadership, 2024).

Moreover, it is widely believed that resistance to change is commonly the main reason for these failures and a major hindrance for organisational change initiatives. Thus, effective leadership is crucial to successful change and not all leaders have sufficient experience or knowledge about how to manage this type of situation. (Abdul Rashid et al., 2004)

Considering the previous context, this study intends to answer the following question: *What are the key competencies and skills necessary for leaders to successfully support their teams through organisational change?*

The results of this research aims to:

Contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of organisational change by investigating the relationship between employee behavior and leadership in the context of organisational change.

Contribute to practice, by defining key leadership competencies necessary for effective leadership through change, considering the insights as a tool of training across organisations for supervisors and management teams across organisations especially in the catering industry to become change-capable leaders.

1.3 Statement of the research objectives

To get an answer to the main question and better understanding of the factors involved in organisational change, it is necessary to address some other key elements which are presented in a specific logic order by which this study seeks to answer the following questions and objectives:

1. What is organisational change? Explore a variety of definitions about the concept of organisational change according to different authors and what are the types of change.
2. How to improve the implementation of changes? Outline a recommended sequence of steps for leaders on how to implement change initiatives, in the first phase, the preparation of the team, followed by strategies of engagement, which includes communication, collaboration and commitment.
3. What are people's reactions to change? Examine some of the most common reactions and behaviours that employees can go through during the transition process and the importance of leaders managing them.

4. How to lead successful change? Investigate the role of leaders in driving people to successful change by supporting different types of behavior to adapt and its relation with the tangible and intangible impact in the organisation.
5. What are the critical leadership skills for change management? Define the top competencies for leaders to develop and become effective change managers.

1.4 Information gathering & data collection

This study attempts to analyse both points of view. On one hand the leader's feedback would help to understand the differences between successful and unsuccessful strategies they had led in their experience, from which it can be highlighted useful best practices for future implementations.

On the other hand, catering staff would contribute in identifying the most common causes that can lead to failure of change strategies as well as their attitudes towards change and also their expectations from leaders, and desired competencies that they value more.

The data for this study has been gathered from some members of the management team and catering staff working for different catering companies in Dublin. Based on a constructivist point of view adopted for this research, a qualitative method through semi-structured interviews as an instrument with open ended questions was the most appropriate technique for data collection.

1.5 Expected outcomes of the study

Using this as a guide of best practices, leaders can gain significant knowledge and improve their skills to apply organisational change effectively. Consequently, the results would benefit everyone involved, so the leaders can have better understanding about how to deal with different types of behaviours, and develop leadership strengths. Employees would gain trust in the organisation and leaders by shifting its attitude towards organisational change culture and improve performance. Lastly, organisations would have better productivity results, stronger teams and enhance adaptability culture.

1.6 Chapter by chapter overview

This study is structured in five chapters. The first commences with an introduction of the literature and background data with statistics about organisational change and highlighting the critical role of leadership for change implementations.

The second, is the literature review focused on five themes related to the research question including, definition of organisational change and types, the preparation of the implementation stage, exploration of people reactions to change, how to lead successful change, and finally the key leadership skills for navigating change.

The third explains the methodology under the study was developed. A constructivist ontology with an inductive approach was employed, thus a qualitative research method technique was the instrument adopted for data collection and interpretivist data analysis.

Chapter four explains the findings of the primary research in relation to the literature review in order to answer the research question.

Lastly, the fifth chapter presents the conclusion of the study, highlighting change as a cornerstone for organisations and the importance of integrating the human side in strategies

in addition to effective leadership to achieve successful implementations. Finalising with the limitations and recommendations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Organizational change is a vital process for business to thrive nowadays in basically all industries. Innovation, new technologies, shifting customer preferences, different market dynamics, are some of the main reasons, especially in the catering industry where customer experience and efficiency in operations are crucial, the ability of the organization and leaders to adapt and manage change effectively would impact in the results and performance and determine its long-term success. This involves not only structural and or operational alterations, but also the human factor.

Therefore, leadership plays a key role in facilitating successful transitions and meeting the company goals. To implement and guide teams effectively through this process and foster collaboration, leaders require certain technical and personal competencies, such as effective communication, strategic thinking and emotional intelligence.

This study aims to explore the necessary competencies for effective leadership during organizational change, particularly in the catering industry. Drawing from different authors and recent research, this paper will touch key themes starting with the nature and types of organizational change, the implementation process and employee reactions, then the strategies for supporting people through transitions, and the critical skills leaders must

develop. By addressing these areas, this research seeks to serve as a tool for leaders to navigate the challenges of change process successfully.

2.2 Understanding organisational change.

To understand the process, first it is necessary to define what organizational change is; it can be as simple as Barnett and Carroll (1995 p. 217) stated "*a transformation of an organization between two points in time*". Or, in a broader context, most analysts refer to it as the process of adaptation, through which an organization alters either its structure, operations, culture or processes. The drivers for change are commonly in response to external factors, and hardly for internal reasons. (Oakland & Tanner, 2007; Recklies, 2001; Stobierski, 2020; Barnett & Carroll 2005; Boyles, 2023)

Authors agree that change can be classified normally in two types, however, these types differ between them. According to Stobierski (2020), it can be adaptive which means, small adaptations to evolve over time, or transformational, larger in scale and scope. Recklies (2001) divides them into organizational development, based on the assumption that corporate and individual objectives can be aligned. And reengineering, which challenges all elements of processes or structures. Mansaray (2019) argues that these can be planned vs unplanned. The first often represents continuous improvement in the existing conditions whereas the second could be more drastic in response to external influences.

It can be concluded that organizational change is the process by which companies adapt and alter one or more of its components in any internal area. These changes can be categorized by its magnitude or degree of difficulty, and by its nature or driver of change.

2.3 Leading the process of change – Implementation phase

As mentioned by Bekmukhambetova (2021), research shows that "70% of corporate transformations fail. 39% of failures are explained by the resistance of employees to changes, 33% by the lack of support for changes from the managers, and only 14% by inadequate resources and other reasons". Some organisations plan their strategies without considering or taking it as an isolated element, the role of human factor and the importance of leaders bridging between them and the achievement of goals. Thus, a critical element for the implementation is individuals' participation. (Bekmukhambetova, 2021 p.99; CCL, 2024; Oakland & Tanner, 2007)

This stage requires a structured approach, literature has a wide range of models and frameworks to address organizational change. Some of the most well-known are Lewin's model of change (Lewin, 2016); the theory of E & O of organizational change (Nohria & Beer, 2020); ADKAR model (Hiatt, 2013); and Kotter's model (Kotter, 1996). ADKAR model focus on people and emphasize their importance enabling successful long-lasting change. (Bekmukhambetova, 2021)

The selection of an approach to follow and prepare for change should be made taking into consideration various aspects of the organisation and circumstances, it should be noted that all models have its advantages and drawbacks, hence a mix of them tailored to the strategy it is recommended. (Bekmukhambetova, 2021)

Leading by example can be the difference between succeeding and failing in this stage. Leaders must prepare their teams for change by addressing concerns and involving them in the planning and decision-making process. Based on the research, there are key actions in

common for leaders when implementing change and minimize resistance to change. (Boyles, 2023; Cameron & Green, 2019 p.57)

The first and most important is communication with stakeholders, communicating not only the how but also the why creating stronger buy-in and urgency for change. Share a vision, explaining the benefits and connecting with values. Storytelling can help get employees on board, especially if they are portrayed as the heroes. (CCL, 2024; Boyles, 2023)

The second is engagement & collaboration, bringing people together to execute the plan is crucial. Encourage them to step out of their comfort zone and as Margolis says about leaders "acting as the spark that inspires, encourages, enables, and reassures your team so that they can adapt in both small and large ways to deliver value continuously." (Margolis cited in Boyles, 2023)

Lastly building commitment, leaders must support change with its own beliefs and behaviours influencing and setting an example to others. Another way is investing in training and development, whether it is for specific knowledge and skills or coaching people in something, demonstrates commitment to both change and people. (Cameron & Green, 2019; CCL, 2024)

2.4 Peoples' reactions to change

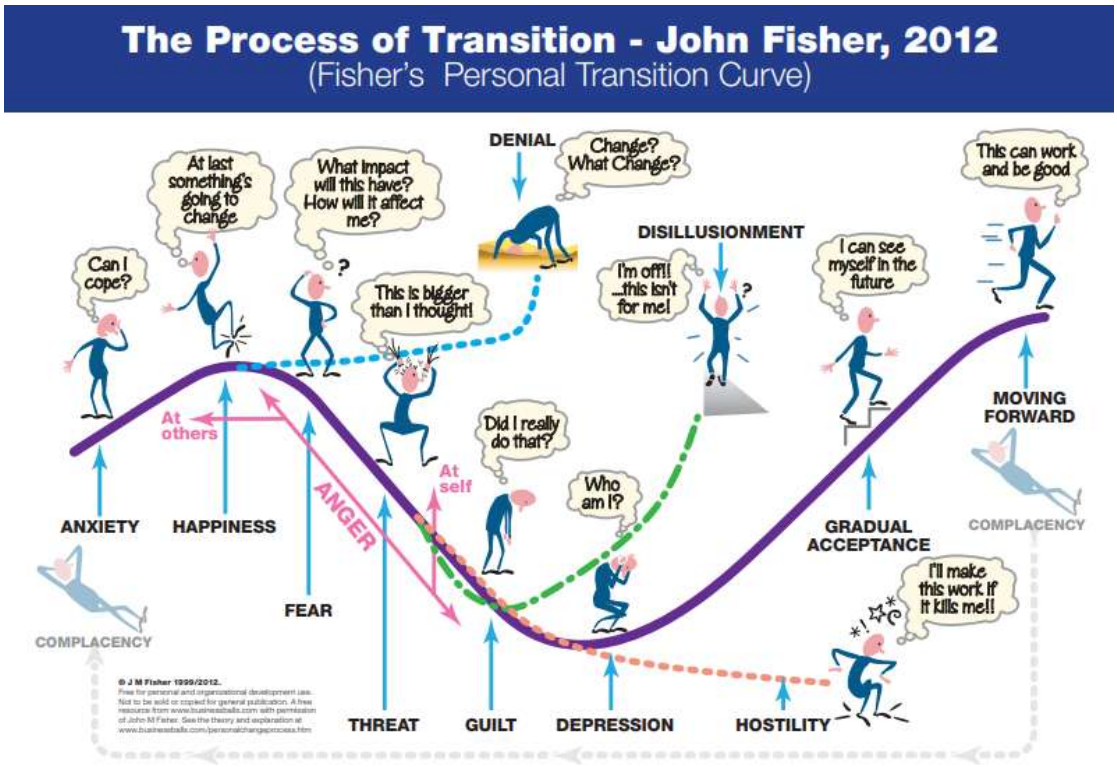
Recent literature, such as Will & Mueller discuss that the actions taken during the change process have multi-levels of interdependency and impact throughout the organization. Thus, the need of consider when planning the 'soft side' which is the human and behavioural factor (i.e. individual motivation toward change, values, human potential & participation as

competitive advantage) in addition to the strategical ‘hard side’ such as, resources, costs, timelines, etc. (Will & Mueller cited at Da Ros et al, 2023)

Consistently with these findings, there has been a significant shift in theories about organizational development. Frequent issues deal with resistance to change, openness to change, reactions to change, attitudes toward change, willingness to change, readiness to change, and receptivity to change. So, in order to succeed, leaders need deep understanding about individuals and organizational development are not separate activities, they are closely related and participation is critical for the implementation. (Da Ros et al, 2023)

Employees' reactions can vary significantly, resistance is the most common. Behavioural insights reveal that resistance often comes from uncertainty or the threat to job security perception, emphasizing the need for consistent and clear communication (Kotter & Cohen, 2002). Moreover, leaders who recognize and act accordingly to these reactions can mitigate resistance and enhance engagement (Caldwell et al. 2008)

The Fisher’s (2012) personal transition curve illustrates the emotional stages employees can experience during change, understanding these stages enable leaders to empathetically address them and provide tailored support.



Source: https://www.businessballs.com/freepdfmaterials/fisher-transition-curve-2012bb.pdf

2.5 Leading successful change, behavioral factor and its impact in the organisation

Leaders must develop competencies that address diverse behavioural types. For instance, adaptive leadership techniques that provide personalized support and open communication are essential for helping employees navigate transitions. An example of this can be removing barriers to leverage employee success rather than focusing only on the results.

Behavioural models postulate that recognizing the individual motivations and concerns of each employee provides a basis to gain trust and cooperation during organizational shifts (Burnes, 2004). Theories like the ADKAR model further emphasize the importance of psychological support and skill development in enabling effective transitions among employees. (Hiatt, 2006)

Furthermore, in addition to effective communication, Rose (2018) claimed that strengthening the culture of change within the organization, pushes people to perform beyond their limits. Review also found some of the major hindrances are lack of authority and clarity about their roles along with lack of time and focus from higher levels. Hence hierarchical authority enforcement and clear definition of roles also plays an important part, as well as allocation of time and focus from superiors can influence attitudes of team members. (Magnasofa & Mardiati, 2019)

Having in place a strategy that integrates all components and levels of the organization along with an effective leadership not only is more likely to succeed but also can have significant tangible and intangible impact overall in the organization, such as: (Da Ros et al, 2023)

Tangible Outcomes

- ✔ **Survival**. Sustainability in the long-term, growth, improved business performance.
- ✔ **Profitability**. Reduce costs, increase productivity and capacity.
- ✔ **Value development**. New skills and competencies, efficiency, effectiveness, client value, quality, equity, safety, reliability, due process.
- ✔ **Innovation**. New technological tools and devices foster an innovative environment for implementation of new ideas.
- ✔ **Behaviours**. Organizational, individual & customer positive attitudes and behaviours.
- ✔ **Objective outputs**. Performance indicators and improved results.

Intangible Outcomes

- ✔ **Customer Satisfaction**. Perceived and reported satisfaction.

- ✔ **Employee satisfaction.** Quality of work, commitment, engagement, well-being, fulfilment, security, reward, less incidences related to sickness, absenteeism, turnover.
    - o Physical health. Less deterioration, exhaustion, health disorders.
    - o Mental health. Work-life balance, less stress, psychological disorders, anxiety, abuse of alcohol, use of toxic substances.
    - o Social health. Sound relationships with colleagues, friends and family, social support.

2.5 Critical leadership skills for organisational change

Jackson and Parry describe leadership as a practice where leaders apply their skills and knowledge in guiding and bringing together a group of individuals in the anticipated course of action that is relevant to the organization goals and objectives. Moreover, an effective leader must possess certain skills and characteristics, passion, consistency, trust and vision are crucial to build trust in employees. (Jackson & Parry, cited in Mansaray, 2019)

In addition, Stobierski (2020) says that leaders have to be courageous by taking on risks. Here are some of the key leadership competencies which most authors agree on for effective change management, these include: communication, emotional intelligence,

adaptability, organizational skills, strategic thinking, and conflict resolution. (Stobierski, 2020; CMI, 2023; CCL 2024;

Emotional intelligence provides for a leader to be able to understand the emotions and feelings of both himself and his employees and to obtain resilience while dealing with crises (Goleman, 1995). Adaptability helps a leader to remain flexible when facing the dynamic nature of varying environments. With these attributes; critical and strategic thinking will enable the leader to anticipate some situations where he might find risks and be able to solve them early or control them. Literature cannot highlight enough the importance of strong communication skills; communicating effectively is vital along the whole process and with everyone involved. Conflict resolution skills are important as they allow the leader to address conflict and maintain harmony among team members during transition. (Knight, 2023; Magnasofa & Najib, 2019)

As Prof. Hill says, leadership is about self-development, leaders continuously learn from experience and develop their skills, especially when facing adversity. Finally, a skill that is included in the nuances of emotional intelligence, but it is worth to highlight is resilience, dealing with change situations can be really challenging, being able to stay on track despite setbacks, could be the key to succeed (Hill, L. cited in Knight, 2023; CCL, 2024)

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the research methodology undertaken for this study regarding the key skills and competencies for leaders to successfully implement changes in the workplace grounding it in a qualitative and constructivist approach. A

qualitative method was carried out for this study, which allowed a deeper understanding from the employees and management point of view and experience working in the catering industry.

The research plan, including the research approach, sampling strategy, data-collection technique, analysis method and measures taken to ensure trustworthiness and ethical integrity are the main components of this chapter.

3.1 Theoretical Paradigm

This study adopts a constructivist worldview with an inductive approach, which proposes that knowledge is subjective and emerges collectively from social interactions and interpretation, rather than individually. (Schwandt, 2000)

An interpretivist view of the world suggests that there are multiple realities based on individuals' perspectives that form their own view of the world according to different contexts, experiences, beliefs and interactions with others. Through this lens, the researcher attempts to understand the world by recognizing individuals that form part of the phenomena being studied within their world and accepts that their own subjectivity forms part of the process of understanding. Hence, the methodology used requires a dialogue between the researcher and group members of the phenomena under study. (Khan, 2014)

In contrast to deductive approach which is more focused on hypothesis testing to verify or refuse theories based on empirical data. Inductive reasoning seeks to construct generalizations, relationships between concepts and theories by analyzing the data collected. Nonetheless, pre-existing theories or ideas may also be involved when approaching an issue, however in the inductive process, the purpose is not to prove or

negate them, but to create outlines and significance by collecting data. (Gray cited in Khan, 2014)

Ultimately, this type of research is based upon an interpretivist approach as the researcher wants to see the world from the participant's outlook and consider the participant's perception of the world, so that the researcher can interpret this data and find meaning to a particular situation in the form of theory.

3.2 Justification of the research method

Primary data were collected through qualitative method which is adequate when the aim of research is to explain a phenomenon, building theory from the perception of a person's experience in a given situation. This type of research enables in-depth explorations of participants, perceptions and lived experiences through open ended questions that allow participants to answer openly and may provide richer and better data as well as flexibility to probe emerging themes.

Because the purpose of this study was to examine the experiences and perceptions from both perspectives of leaders and employees in the catering industry during the process of organizational change, a qualitative approach via semi structured interviews was the most suitable instrument for data collection. As found in Appendix 1, two types of questionnaires with open-ended questions were designed one for each group respectively, based on the five sub-themes previously mentioned in chapter two.

3.3 Sample technique and data collection

Non-probability convenience sampling method was used for the development of this study. The group of population criteria required participants to have experience working in the

catering industry for at least one year, ensuring depth of insight. All had to be fluent in the English language, although not necessarily to be their native language.

The first group was focus on catering assistants or baristas to give the staff perspective and the second group to obtain the leadership point of view were from mid-level management team, such as supervisor, assistant manager or managers, full or part-time and no age limitation. A convenience sample with a total of six participants were recruited for this study through the researcher's existing professional network who are currently working in the field of interest including three catering staff, two supervisors and one assistant manager from two different catering companies in Ireland.

Interviews were conducted face to face and recorded using a digital voice recorder. Each participant interview took place in a single interview session with an average approximate duration of 15 minutes.

For interview clear identification purposes and anonymity of the participants, a unique code has been assigned. Codes were divided in two categories only, initiating with the letter 'L' for leaders plus number of participant and similarly for staff but identified with an 'S'.

Table of stakeholders interviewed for the study

Code	Position	Setting	Experience	Relevance
L01	Assistant Manager	Co. Dublin	+2 years	Supporting general manager in the day-to-day operation of a fast-food restaurant including administrative, financial operational and strategic activities.
L02	Supervisor	Co. Dublin	1 year	Supporting management in the day-to-day operation of a cafe- restaurant including administrative and operational activities.

L03	Supervisor	Co. Dublin	1.2 years	Supporting management in the day-to-day operation of a healthy fast-food restaurant including administrative and operational activities.
S01	Catering Assistant	Co. Dublin	1.2 years	Customer service in a coffee shop & Bar, food and beverage production
S02	Barista	Co. Dublin		Customer service and barista in a coffee shop
S03	Catering Assistant	Co. Dublin		Customer service in a coffee shop, food and beverage production

3.4 Analysis method

Studies that incorporate grounded theory approach are pro of conceptual thinking and theory building, in other words, theory will be developed from the data analysis.

For this study, thematic analysis method was used and data was organised by inductive coding to aid in understanding the perspectives of the participants and find relations between primary and secondary research.

Thematic coding analysis table

Participant	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4	Theme 5
S01	He's been through both small and significant changes	Significant changes have not always been informed prior the implementation. Lack of communication, no time with management to solve any doubts or feedback. Written communication or face to face.	Reaction depends on the change strategy, if I think it is a good change I feel excited about it, on the contrary if he dislike it, feel anxious and concern. Overall has a positive attitude vs change and it is open	He would like to feel more supported during the whole process and very important to be informed prior the implementation to feel part of the strategy. To enhance a positive attitude and motivation about	Improved communication for not feeling excluded. And clarity on what role is playing in the process. And the purpose of the change. Communication, positive attitude and support.

			to change and improvements.	change, management should encourage the team by making us feel part of the strategy and convince us that the change is for good.	
S02	Currently through a major change in his workplace, the unit is closing and going under a complete renovation	The communication is really bad, he would prefer it face to face.	Positive about change and improvements. But currently anxious because of the miscommunication and perceived lack of planning. There is only one manager and no other leaders to support the team.	The strategy itself has not been informed by the manager, only that the unit was going under renovation without further detail, as in when, why, for how long, or how they should prepared and expect before, during and after the transition. "I know from previous experiences that all staff is important for the company, but here they do not see us like that"	Improve communication that currently is almost inexistent. In advance in a proper and clear way, to help the team to be prepare and more organised. And more management staff, like team leaders or supervisors, to support the team. In previous experience, dynamic environment, all management team were supportive, good planning and clear communication. The organisational culture and leadership knew how to effectively manage changes. The current company often goes through significant changes, so they should invest in

					training for leaders on how to manage the team and changes to implement in a better way.
S03	In the current company she has been through both major and small changes.	Internal small changes, have been some for good, but others does not make sense making processes more inconvenient and less safe in terms of food handling and healthy standards.	The current poor management performance, makes her feel demotivated, angry and indifferent towards change.		Manager has not a positive attitude overall so the environment is stressful and chaotic, organisation and communication should be improved.
L01	In his experience, he's been through both small and major changes. The most recent was the acquisition of the company, so changes in structure and operation systems were in place.	Successful businesses are less prone to change, changes are riskier, therefore should be more strategic and there is no need to make them that often. All aspects and feedback should be considered before implementing. Normally medium and major changes are communicated in advance and give time to prepare and plan times and resources	Although the change of company was informed with anticipation, information was missing, so he was skeptical and unsure about the transition. The transition was not very well managed and organised by the previous company, however, the new administration filled the gaps and adapted quickly. Team does not show much resistance, and have good performance because they care about	He is pro-change, innovation & creativity should be promoted, everything can be improved. His current workplace is fairly new, so all operations are in process of adaptation to see what works best internally and with the customers, feedback is taken into consideration for design the strategies	A healthy environment is priority for management to promote engagement and loyalty. Positive impact in the organisation, enhance reputation. Something that has worked for him is trust the team and let them to do their part, by not micromanage them, just supervising and supporting them when needed.

			employees, so they are committed to the organisation.		
L02	In his experience, he has been through small and major changes	The approach for implementing change is different every time, he tries to communicate asap changes to let the team be mentally prepared	Changes are essential to improve. The current team are mostly resistant to change. Sometimes higher management levels are more resistant to change that lower levels, and harder to convince them when change is needed.	Not all changes can be collectively agreed. It depends on the type of change employees feedback is considered for day by day operation and there is open communication to solve concerns. Others, are just informed. Failures can be down to strategies are unrealistic or who design them have not the practical experience, so in reality are not possible to fully implement them. Communication is key and briefing the people to get the expected results. In the current workplace there is a lack of information and resources for implementations, so there is not a clear direction to follow.	Normally there is not much time to prepare change strategies in the operational level. Attribute successful experiences when they are loyal and trust the leader and understand the reason behind the change. Not all the information can be disclose to all the team, only the necessary. The only way to gain their trust is by being close to them, supportive and empowering people to make own decisions knowing that trust is reciprocate. Sometimes, the impact can be misleading, e.g. in the short term economic impact can be positive, but if the human side is overlooked, you can lose them and the

					value of the business in the long term. Changes should make things easier to operate, so the stress levels go lower and people is happier and perform better, which would have a sustainable positive impact.
L03	Small changes in operation are done very often. Last year he went through a transformational change, the whole brand was renovated, everything changed.	Change can be challenging but I always try to have a positive attitude about it.	Communication from top down was not shared and the same day of the opening supervisors and rest of the team was getting the new information. Normally the organisation fail to communicate everything in advance, but management is always supportive.	Implementation varies every time, depending on the type of change.	Communication in advance would improve implementations, to give time to the team to understand everything an adapt their job"

3.5 Ethical section

Ethics remained a top priority for the researcher throughout the study. By following the methods previously outlined in this chapter were crucial to ensure the validity and reliability of the research.

All participants prior to the interviews received an Informed Consent Form as shown in Appendix 3 with detailed information about the research including explanation of procedures, confidentiality, an offer of future inquiry regarding the recordings, clarification of information, and the right to withdraw and voluntarily accept to participate.

Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained by assigning codes and storing data securely. All participants were over 18 years of age, and did not demonstrate any mental limitation or incapacity that impaired decision-making about its participation in this study or to perform the position they hold in the workplace. Meeting this criteria qualified them as candidates to be part of this study. Furthermore, to mitigate any future risks related to data privacy and confidentiality, all recordings will be securely stored and deleted after five years, as outlined by the research ethics committee.

Chapter 4: Findings and discussion

The purpose of this chapter is to present relevant findings of the present study, and discuss them with the aim of shedding light on some related issues about the initial premise about the significant role of leaders bridging strategy and people for successful organisational change initiatives.

4.1 Understanding organisational change.

As seen in chapter two, organisational change can be defined as the process of adaptation where organisations alter any of its components including structural, operational, cultural or

procedural. (Oakland & Tanner, 2007; Recklies, 2001; Stobierski, 2020; Barnett & Carroll 2005; Boyles, 2023)

Stobierski (2020) states that it can be generally classified in two types: adaptive or small changes to evolve over time, or major transformational changes, larger in scale and scope.

Based on the previous definition, primary research found that all participants are facing different types of organisational changes.

S02 stated that: "*I am currently going through a major change in my workplace, because my unit is closing and going under a complete renovation*".

L03: "*Last week we had changes regarding staff meals and the time and attendance policies*" in addition, "*...last year our unit went through a complete renovation and literally everything changed, the menu, procedures, facilities, so we had to adapt very fast*".

Thus, as previously mentioned in the rationale of the study, change is a constant in modern organisations, there lies the importance of considering it as an object of study. Primary research proves that nowadays all individuals are currently exposed to organisational change of both types in their daily work life. Leaders and employees alike are commonly experiencing in their day-by-day small adaptive changes in their workplace and have gone at least once through major transformative changes recently.

4.2 Leading the process of change – Implementation phase

From the statistic of 70% of failure of change initiatives, the largest percentage is due to employees' resistance to change. So, it raises the question of how can this be improved? As authors Oakland and Tanner (2007) argues, a critical element for the success of the implementation is individuals' participation. Furthermore, leaders must prepare their teams for change by addressing concerns and involving them in the process. There are three crucial

steps that leaders should follow especially prior and during the implementation to minimise resistance to change which are, communication, engagement and collaboration and finally commitment. (Bekmukhambetova, 2021 p.99; Boyles, 2023; Cameron & Green, 2019 p.57, CCL, 2004)

One of the questions formulated for both groups to answer this theme concerned about how the communication is during the process.

In this case, leaders agree with secondary research by recognising that communication is key in preparing the team.

L02: “The approach for implementing change is different every time, but when is a significant change, I try to communicate the team as soon as possible to allow them to prepare”

L03: “Implementation varies every time, depending on the type of change… Communication in advance would improve implementations, to give time to the team to understand everything an adapt their job”

Additionally, L01 builds engagement by involving the team in the strategy with their feedback and decision-making process: “Let's say it has been a busy night at the restaurant and we found something that wasn't working during the busy time. Then we will discuss it all together at the end of the night and be like, OK, why did things go that bad? And then we will say, OK, it's probably because of this, it's not working. So then if we want to make a change, we can make it the next day.”

In contrast with the staff group, they agree that generally for all changes, there is a lack of communication from their leaders, thus, not having a clear understanding of the strategy leads to disengagement.

S01: “Significant changes have not always been informed to us, until the changes are happening, so there is no time to solve any doubts with the leaders. I believe all changes should be previously informed by message or face to face for not feeling excluded”

S02: “The communication is really bad, for example right now we just knew that the unit was going under renovation, without more detail, about the specific dates or what to expect to be prepared and organised”

S03: “I know from previous experiences that all staff is important for the company, but here they do not see us like that”

Overall, the results aid in answering the main research question, showing on both sides, with no exception that communication is vital, particularly before the implementation to prepare the team and promote collaboration, minimizing negative reactions by making them feel a key part of the strategy.

Findings also confirm that leaders have not an outlined process to address implementations, in agreement with Bekmukhambetova (2021), the strategy should be adapted according to different organisational factors and circumstances. But at the same time it can be argued whether in all cases the recommended steps can be applied.

4.3 People's reactions to change.

Secondary research highlights the increasing concern of considering the human behavioral factor in organisational strategies along with the rest of the planning. Although resistance is the most commonly identified reaction, people can react to change in many different ways. Moreover, by identifying these attitudes, leaders can take action to address them, mitigate resistance and translate it to commitment. (Caldwell et al. 2008)

Except for one participant, both groups said to have a positive attitude about change overall. Results on the leadership side agree that changes are essential to improve.

L01: "*I am very towards change. I think that If there is creativity in the workplace, it's always good because you never know what new ideas can bring to a business, innovation is always good. Everything can be upgraded*."

However, comparing answers, employees further stated that their reaction can also vary depending on different factors like preferences, clarity of communication and organisation.

S01: "*My attitude and feelings depend on the change strategy, if I think it is a good change I feel excited about it, on the contrary if I dislike it, I feel anxious and concerned*."

S02: "*I'm positive about change and improvements. But currently I feel anxious because there is no communication and everything seems disorganised. Also there is only one manager in the unit and no other leaders to support the team*".

S03: "Manager does not have a positive attitude overall, so I feel stressed because the environment is stressful and chaotic, the organisation and communication should be improved."

This finding aligns with the recent trend that proposes the significance of considering the human factor as part of the strategy as Da Ros et al. (2023) states, these are closely related and have a great impact in the results.

Hence, leaders should develop skills such as emotional and cultural intelligence as well as empathy for better understanding in facing various reactions and adequately support employees to enhance meaningful results by engaging with them and gaining their commitment to collaborate in achieving the goals.

On the other hand, research should not focus only on employees' reactions, but also on managers as leading with the example and the impact that can cause on employees and for organisations on achieving results.

4.4 Leading successful change, behavioral factor and its impact in the organisation

In addition to knowing how to manage different reactions, there are other related factors that can influence employees behaviour and performance during transitions including, organisational culture, clear role definitions and adaptive leadership for different behavioural types. Consequently, these certainly would impact the outcome.

When the staff group were asked about what they would make them feel more motivated and positive about change. S01: “I would like to feel more support from management during the process and most important to be informed about the changes before implementing, management should encourage the team by making us feel part of the strategy and convince us that the change is for good.”

S02: “Improve communication in advance in a proper and clear way, to help the team to be prepared and more organised. Have more management staff, like team leaders or supervisors, to support the team.In previous experiences in a different company, all the management team was supportive, there was good planning and clear communication, everybody knew what they had to do. The organisational culture was more professional and leadership knew how to effectively manage changes.”

From the analysis of the findings, primary and secondary research reinforces the crucial role of communication, now in relation to clearly informing the role that each individual is playing, which also underpins the line of authority, giving a sense of direction and support for the team.

From the leader's perspective, these findings provide important remarks that suggest that additionally to enhancing a culture of change that fosters innovation, successful implementations are owed to loyalty, and job satisfaction.

L01: "...usually they're not that resistant because I think this comes mostly down to loyalty. How loyal we make employees be. And I think usually that comes with employees being a lot more happy to work there and being comfortable and seeing the team not as just acquaintances or more as I want to help the business, I want to help the team."

L02: "Any change is possible when you have a team that respects you and understands that what you are doing has a reason behind… Changes should be to make things easier, so the stress levels go lower and people are happier and perform better, which would have a long-term positive impact."

Thus, especially regarding transformational changes, a holistic strategy that considers all factors including human is fundamental for long-lasting results. Leadership should nurture a healthy work environment and promote a culture of change to boost success by leveraging employees' satisfaction and traducing it into positive tangible and intangible impact in the organisation such as, revenue, performance, retention, innovation, competitive advantage, customer satisfaction, etc.

4.5 Critical leadership skills for organisational change

Considering that leader as Jackson and Parry (2019) suggest is a guide for followers in a certain direction that aligns with the organisational objectives by applying its knowledge and skills.

Staff group participants were asked about what they would expect specifically from their leaders when implementing changes.

S01: "*Management should improve communication and motivation, encouraging us that we are part of that change and convincing us that the change is for good and to have a positive attitude.*"

S02: "*The company often goes through significant changes, so they should invest in training for leaders on how to manage the team and changes to implement them in a better way.*"

S03: "*Manager should be more competent, professional and experienced and not taking things personally, communication and organisation should be improved*"

The results support previous studies as shown in chapter two, where some of the skills mentioned are considered crucial for implementing changes, identified as the most recurrent and paramount throughout the development of this study is communication skills. Communication is key in translating strategies into action, a great part of the implementation holds from this to achieve results.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a comprehensive discussion of the findings by triangulating both results from the leaders and employees perspective in comparison with the secondary research, enabling to answer the overall research question in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

So, in answering the main research question, according to the findings, it can be concluded firstly that an effective organizational change needs to involve in the strategic planning both, the core and soft side, acknowledging the role that people play at all levels of the organization. Therefore, the need for organisations of capable leaders which are crucial for a smooth implementation.

Moreover, developing the ability of recognizing diverse behaviors and having developed skills such as emotional and cultural intelligence, would enable leaders to take action accordingly, for example, direct support and incentivizing employees to take ownership of the change is a cornerstone for leaders in achieving engagement and commitment for long-lasting results.

Secondly, it is imperative to understand that outstanding change strategies can be designed but effective communication can be the turning point for successful implementations and leaders play a pivotal role in delivering a compelling message that motivates and gets the team on board. Even more, results showed that employees are eager to know the details of the change, in terms of understanding the objective, expected outcomes and impact on them, which can lead to uncertainty and as a consequence to different reactions, therefore effective communication is indispensable in mitigating resistance which is the main cause of failures.

In addition, a relation between leaders and followers of mutual trust and respect and leading by example tends to inspire employees and reciprocate behaviors, showing less resistance and promoting a climate of innovation enhancing change culture.

In summary, this study emphasises the inevitable need for organisational change in modern times to stay relevant, becoming a reality for organisations in order to survive. Nevertheless, according to statistics, most of them fail, having a negative impact on its overall

performance. This problem is owed to the fact that organisations are failing in addressing one basic element, which is equipping leaders with the essential skills and information needed to lead change.

Specifically the catering industry is one of the most dynamic businesses globally. Thus leaders must be particularly adept at adaptability and managing change initiatives to keep pace with customer expectations and industry trends.

Recommendations

Researchers should consider examining further on the specific context of how to specifically address some of the most common behaviours that leaders can be facing and consequently the recommended strategies to deal with each emotional stage of the transition process, to build on the current study findings.

Based on the findings, for leaders, there is no one-size-fits-all framework to approach organisational change and follow. Hence, a mix of them and taking what best suits according to all the components and circumstances of the situation such as the company size, resources, type of change, etc. seems to be the way forward.

Organisations should focus more on the central role of leaders and their impact by implementing strategic training, courses and workshops to learn and / or develop leadership skills in diverse scenarios that enable them to effectively lead change initiatives and as a result achieve organisational goals.

Leaders should pay more attention to the flow and content of communication to employees which almost certainly would reflect in more positive attitudes towards change.

Limitations

The design of the current study is subject to some limitations:

Results may not be completely representative as they are only from a small participant group.

Future research should reconfirm these findings by conducting large-scale studies.

Limited access to data, only mid-level leaders were interviewed due to difficulty to schedule interview with high level managers.

Time constraints owing to the short deadline period for conducting the interviews and data collection.

Finally, leaders from all levels can benefit and learn from these results to predict and alleviate different types of resistance in order to achieve the desired results.

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