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Abstract *Explains how we used the change message components of discrepancy, appropriateness, efficacy, principal support, and personal valence and the message conveying strategies of active participation, persuasive communication and management of information suggested by Armenakis and colleagues to help an organization create readiness for a major reorganization. We describe and evaluate our experiences from our initial coaching with the president, through initial management meetings to determine the new business unit's strategy and structure, to the initial company-wide announcement of the plans. We conclude with a set of observations and lessons and suggestions for future research on the use of the change message framework.*

Implementing organizational change is one of the most important, yet, least understood skills of contemporary leaders. It is quite common for the business press to report that numerous organizations have experienced less than desirable performance improvements and unfavorable employee reactions to needed organizational changes (see Gilmore *et al.*, 1997). We feel that some of the negative responses to organizational changes are caused by leaders' oversight of the importance of communicating a consistent change message. The change message both conveys the nature of the change and shapes the sentiments that determine reactions to the change.

Typically, the process of organizational change is thought of as unfolding in three phases (e.g. Armenakis *et al.*, 1999; Lewin, 1947). During the first phase, readiness, organizational members become prepared for the change and ideally become its supporters. In the second phase, adoption, the change is implemented and employees adopt the new ways of operating. However, the adoption period is a trial or an experimental period and employees can still ultimately reject the change. The third phase, institutionalization, flows from efforts to maintain the adoption period and reinforce the changes until they become internalized and the norm. We conceptualize these three phases of the change process with the Möbius strip depicted in Figure 1. The strip clearly shows that the phases of change overlap and that the whole process is continuous as institutionalized changes themselves become the focus of future change efforts.

The change message and its communication can serve to coordinate the three change phases by providing the organizing framework for creating readiness and the motivation to adopt and institutionalize the change. In a set of articles, Armenakis *et al.*, (1993, 1999) outlined frameworks specifying the

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five domains that a change message must address and three strategies change agents can use to convey that change message.

The five key change message components

The five message domains identified by Armenakis *et al.* (1999) are discrepancy, efficacy, appropriateness, principal support and personal valence. We feel that these five message domains apply to all transformation efforts, regardless of the intervention model (for an example of another change model, see, Kotter, 1995) being followed by a change agent. The resulting sentiments created by the content of these message domains combine to shape an individual's motivations, positive (readiness and support) or negative (resistance), toward the change.

Discrepancy addresses the sentiment regarding whether change is needed and is typically demonstrated by clarifying how an organization's current performance differs from some desired end-state (Katz and Kahn, 1978). In order for individuals to be motivated to change, they must believe that something is wrong and something needs to change. Efficacy refers to sentiments regarding confidence in one's ability to succeed (Bandura, 1986). Consistent with the expectancy theory of motivation (e.g. Vroom, 1964), individuals will only be motivated to attempt a change to the extent that they have confidence that they can succeed.

The appropriateness of the change is important because individuals may feel some form of change is needed but may disagree with the specific change being proposed. Their resulting resistance is clearly well-intentioned and potentially beneficial because it is based on a disagreement about the appropriateness of a particular change. If a change message cannot convince others of the appropriateness of the change, then efforts should be made to reconsider whether it really is appropriate. Armenakis *et al.* (1990), have explained the mistakes that executives, managers, and consultants can make in organizational diagnosis. If some of these mistakes are prevalent then an organizational change designed to respond to the diagnosis is likely to be inappropriate and ineffective.

The fourth message component is principal support. Change requires resources and commitment to see it through to institutionalization. Employees have seen so many change efforts stall due to lack of support that they have become skeptical and unwilling actively to support the change until a clear demonstration of support is made. In a study of 91 hospitals, Nutt (1986) found

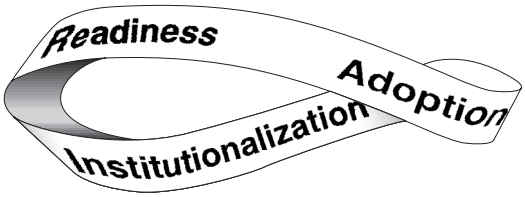

Figure 1.
Möbius strip

that the most successful change tactics were those in which members of the change target perceived early and continuing change agent support.

The final message component is personal valence. Members of the change target are interested in "what is in it for me?" During organizational change, Cobb *et al.* (1995) emphasize that members of the change target will assess the distribution of positive and negative outcomes, the fairness of the change, and the manner in which individuals are treated. Thus, if an individual's self-interest is threatened a proposed change will likely be resisted (Clarke *et al.*, 1996).

The three change message conveying strategies

As depicted in Figure 2, Armenakis *et al.* (1993) identified three message conveying strategies – persuasive communication (direct communication efforts), active participation (involving people in activities designed to have them learn directly), and managing internal and external information (making the views of others available) – that change agents could utilize to convey the five components of the change message and create readiness for change.

Persuasive communication can take many forms including speeches, either live or recorded, and written communication like newsletters, memos, and

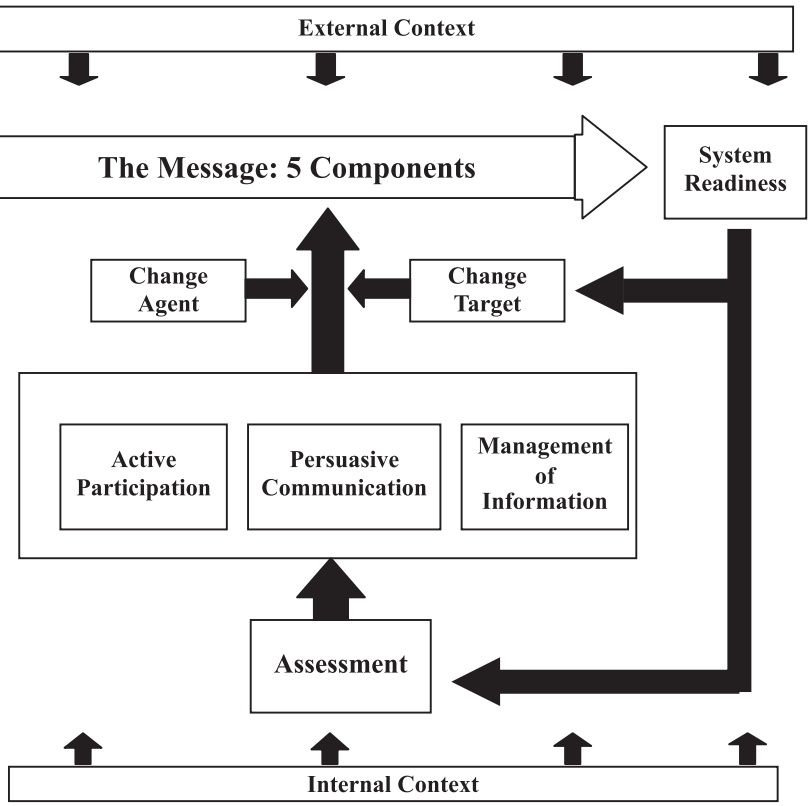

Figure 2.
The readiness model

annual reports. In persuasive communication, the change agent is directly communicating, through primarily verbal means, the change message.

The active participation strategy is perhaps the most effective in transmitting the message components because it capitalizes on self-discovery (Fishbein and Azjen, 1975). Armenakis *et al.* (1999) identify three forms of active participation: enactive mastery (gradually building skills, knowledge, and efficacy through successive involvement and practice), vicarious learning (observing and learning from others), and participation in decision making. This self-discovery, when combined with the symbolic meaning of organizational leaders demonstrating their confidence in the wisdom of employees (through participation), can produce a genuine feeling of a partnership.

The management of information refers to using internal and external sources to provide information regarding the change. Sometimes this information can provide a vicarious learning opportunity described in active participation. In general, a message generated by more than one source, especially if the source is external to the organization, is considered to be more believable (Gist, 1987). The sources may include sharing articles from the popular press about industry trends or competitor successes/failures or sharing the organization's financial records to demonstrate a cost management problem. Bringing in speakers to inform about how world events will affect the operations of the organization or consultants to provide their expert opinion may also be helpful.

Our purpose in this paper is to demonstrate how Armenakis *et al.*'s frameworks can be used to guide and orchestrate an organization's efforts to create readiness for a major organizational change. Specifically, we will describe how we used these frameworks in one organization to direct its initial readiness-building efforts in preparation for a large-scale organizational change. Such a demonstration offers guidance for other interested external and internal change agents and also helps flesh out the frameworks and explore their utility.

A case in creating readiness for a major reorganization

On the heels of a major product change and some key resignations, a large multinational corporation decided to combine several distinct sales and service-oriented units drawn from diverse divisions in one of its information technology (IT) companies to form an autonomous, profit-center business unit (BU). It was hoped that the new BU would be able to capture economies of scale and provide the integration of activities that had previously been dispersed and uncoordinated. When the new organization was to be fully on-line in nine months, it would have sales of close to $500 million and a workforce of over 1,500.

After the initial announcement of the plan, the newly appointed president of the BU asked us to help him with the process of designing, strategically focusing, and transitioning to the new organization. Guided by the Armenakis

et al.'s frameworks, we approached this time-sensitive assignment with an emphasis on the creation of readiness, the determination and articulation of the message components, and the three message conveying strategies. In our mind, the first order of business was to coach and prepare the president for his change agent role.

Initial coaching of the president

In part, the president asked us to help with the reorganization because we had previously helped him manage a very unpopular facilities move that he had inherited from a predecessor. In this role, we shared the Armenakis *et al.* models with him and suggested he work on a communication effort to convey the five components of the readiness message to help ease concerns and raise readiness. After sending out an email version of his readiness message regarding the move, the president reported to us that the response had been positive and one person had even contacted him and thanked him for "treating them like adults."

As a result of this experience, the president asked us to consult with him on appropriate change strategies for the creation of the new BU. The president felt that our approach would complement his desire for the kind of team-based, collaborative culture he wanted to emphasize. The president's immediate concern was determining the BU strategy and organizational structure so that a management team could be assembled to continue the change planning and help make the nine-month transition. To complicate matters, the "transitional" BU organization had to coexist with the continued operations of the current organization.

Our discussions with the president about the strategy and structure of the BU were shaped by our emphasis on the process for accomplishing the change. In discussing process, we emphasized the change message and the three message conveying strategies. For example, we continually asked "what will you say when people ask 'why' they need to change?" and we encouraged a decision making process that would be easier to "sell" as appropriate and doable. We also helped the president see the symbolic and cultural value of the various strategies (Armenakis *et al.*, 1999).

The president was emphatic about the need to create a cohesive management team and gain their ownership of the change. We suggested, and the president enthusiastically supported, an active-participation strategy in the form of a problem-solving meeting of key managers. The managers would work together to diagnose the situation, work on strategy and structure decisions, become better acquainted, and become personally more ready for the change.

Management strategy meeting

Although there was little precedence for it in the firm, a two-day strategy meeting was scheduled with 24 key managers drawn from the various units being merged. We felt that 24 was too many for such a meeting, but the

president wanted to include the key manager from each merging unit plus a cadre of his own current unit's management team. After discussing our concerns about the manageability of the size, the potential risks of appearing to have "stacked the deck" with his own people, and including several who clearly would not ultimately be selected to be on the final executive team, the president decided he still wanted to include all 24. Therefore, we planned the meeting to involve small group activities to allow for everyone to contribute individually and to get to know one another better. Using a management of information strategy, the top manager in each unit was asked to develop a short presentation to share with the group regarding their unit and its activities and initiatives.

In working with the president to prepare his remarks to the group (a persuasive communication strategy), we helped him structure his comments around the five key change message components. One of the "lessons" that came out of this endeavor was our increased awareness of the overlap between strategic "vision" and the change message. Leadership visions are designed to mobilize organizations toward the attainment of some future state that is expressed in terms that generate enthusiasm (Collins and Porras, 1996). We began to realize that the motivational aspects of vision could be enhanced by making sure that the vision addressed the five message components. Using this as a guide, we helped the president articulate his vision for the new BU and prepare his opening remarks for the meeting.

In our early meetings with the president, we had emphasized the importance of an effort to assess the organization's readiness for the change and solicit their input regarding suggestions for improvements in the process or direction. The president agreed and directed us to begin the development of a questionnaire that could be used to accomplish this end. It was decided that we would also discuss this assessment effort at the management meeting.

The meeting format was planned to have a general information session the morning and early afternoon of the first day where the whole group was involved in hearing presentations and discussing issues. After introductions, the president spent the morning articulating his vision of the new BU. Then the manager of each unit being merged was asked to share a brief overview of their unit's business and their current initiatives. The group also heard a presentation on the firm's culture and history and a review of the firm's financial situation and plans.

After being exposed to these persuasive communication and information strategies, the agenda for the remainder of the day turned to an active participation strategy in the form of group problem solving and decision making. First, consistent with an information strategy, we provided the group with an overview of the Armenakis *et al.*'s model of the change message and the message communication strategies to help frame their group assignment. After this discussion, the larger group was divided into five diverse subgroups and asked to do a quick strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats

(SWOT) analysis for the BU, identify the top business priorities for the next few months, and develop a preferred organizational structure for the BU.

The second day was devoted to analyzing and discussing the various outcomes of the small group meetings and outlining next transition steps, including change message communication and an organizational readiness assessment. Unfortunately, we did not have a chance to introduce the idea of a questionnaire-based readiness assessment and share the initial draft we had developed until the very end of the meeting. Additionally, we failed to adequately create readiness for such an assessment and the time constraints left little time to do so. The notion of such an assessment was foreign to the managers, their general experience with questionnaires was negative, and we presented it at the end of a grueling two days. In retrospect, we should have worked harder to craft a change message to build readiness for the assessment and not introduced the idea until we had the time to share that message completely. More opportunity for active participation on the part of the group in the design would have also been advantageous. As it was, our introduction of the assessment led to resistance and ended with a promise to work with them later on the idea. More will be said about this effort later in this case review.

In addition to making a strong movement on the content of the change, this first meeting made great strides on the process of creating a team-based set of norms and readiness for change in the key management team. Specifically, through the president's persuasive communication of his "draft" vision, the externally- and internally-provided information from us and the other presenters, and the group's active participation in the initial planning process, these managers were exposed to all five domains of the change message. They gained clarity on the need for change and the opportunities it represented (discrepancy). They were involved in shaping the actual change (appropriateness). They were exposed to other managers and gauged their strengths and discussed the obstacles facing the change and how they might be overcome (efficacy). They heard from the president regarding his commitment and the commitment of the corporation to the restructuring (principal support). And finally, they got a direct idea of the benefits to themselves (valence) as they were discussing the very nature of the organization that they would play a key role in running.

In an anonymous evaluation of the meeting at its conclusion, the managers expressed appreciation for being involved and indicated that they found the meeting very useful in helping them understand the magnitude of the reorganization task and also helped them build their confidence in the management team and team-based approach taken by the president. They also expressed the view that the group was too large but they could understand the rationale for everyone's inclusion. The president also confirmed that comments made to him after the meeting indicated that the meeting was viewed very favorably and that we had improved the readiness of the management team.

Following this initial strategy meeting and after additional discussions with some key managers and the corporate leadership, the president made his

decisions regarding the structure and began assembling his management team. We worked with the president to plan a second management meeting of the thirteen managers (all of whom participated in the first management meeting) filling the executive roles in the new structure.

The executive team meeting

The purpose of this day-long meeting (active participation) was to clarify the structure and how it would work, discuss and decide on immediate transition plans, and plan the formal employee communication effort to describe the new BU's structure and strategy. In our role as facilitators of this meeting, we positioned the communication effort as a major persuasive communication opportunity and again framed the discussion around the five key change messages. After reminding each manager that they were the most persuasive communication source for their employees and encouraging them to communicate with them, we moved to planning the organization-wide announcement of the new organization.

Given the size of the overall organization and its geographical dispersion (multiple continents) and consistency with past practice, the executive group decided that the primary communication vehicle would be an all-employee teleconference of a live presentation to approximately 400 employees at one of the larger facilities. Hereafter, we refer to this teleconference presentation as the readiness speech. At our urging, the president and the executive team used the five change-message-components framework to guide the design and content of the speech. To enhance the richness (Lengle and Daft, 1988) of the presentation, it was decided that visuals would be provided via the Internet and employee questions would be fielded. To demonstrate broader management support, the hour-long presentation content was divided among three key managers, with the majority of the content being presented by the president. After the meeting, different individuals were tasked with developing certain aspects of the speech or providing needed information. The president combined the material and created a draft that we reviewed and edited for consistency with the five change message components.

The readiness speech

The readiness speech for this change effort was a persuasive communication strategy to help create readiness among employees for the new BU organization (that was to officially start in six months) and the transition it required. We use the opportunity of our review of the readiness speech that follows to provide greater explanation of the five key change message components and structure our review of the speech by each component.

Discrepancy. Discrepancy can be stated in terms of a question, namely, "is change really necessary?" Denial is a natural employee reaction to any given change (Bridges, 1991). Thus, a compelling need for change should be made obvious to members of the change target. To send the message that change is needed, it is helpful to explain what has happened in the external context (e.g.

changing economic conditions, industry de-regulation) and/or the internal context (e.g. unacceptable levels of product quality) to bring about the need for change.

In our example, the parent corporation decided to merge various units to create a stand-alone BU. The corporation saw an opportunity to fine tune the business focus and capitalize on the synergies existing across the units. Their motivation for change was less about reacting to a clear problem as it was in trying to capitalize on an opportunity. In justifying the need for the organizational change, the president's message placed more emphasis on the opportunity afforded by the change; the discrepancy that was emphasized was between what the current organization was and how much better it could be. Specific synergistic, market-related advantages of the new integrated organization were addressed and examples given.

Appropriateness. When an organization announces that a new strategy and accompanying structure are needed, change target members may ask "is the specific change being introduced an appropriate reaction to the need (discrepancy)?" The question of appropriateness seems to be particularly relevant when many organizations are implementing changes, such as the numerous organizations downsizing over the past few years (e.g. Morris *et al.*, 1999), that appear to be based on fad or fashion rather than careful diagnosis and planning. Thus, communicating that the specific change was determined through careful diagnosis and planning minimizes the likelihood that the change will be perceived as arbitrary.

Individuals who were not part of the analysis and change decision will be interested in knowing some of the details of the process. In the case of the readiness speech, employees were told about the key manager strategy meetings that had been central to the efforts. Examples of how the new structure provided an opportunity to integrate sales and service offerings and better serve the customers and maximize the likelihood of success were shared. Naturally, the readiness speech included a summary of the management team's SWOT analysis and the resulting priorities and structure. It was also stressed that the top management team was confident about the decisions made and that given the opportunity and the same tight time constraints the same diagnosis and planning process would be followed again.

Efficacy. The question that best captures the efficacy component is, "can I/we successfully implement the change?" If individuals do not have the confidence to embrace a new way of operating, then an organizational change will be difficult, at best. In the readiness speech, the president addressed efficacy by making six major points:

(1) the organization has been successful in the past and by working smarter (the purpose of the change) there is no reason to doubt the organization's ability to succeed;

(2) the organization has a good reputation and dedicated employees;

(3) the organization has landed some new large contracts with major players in the IT industry;

(4) the organization is in a position to control its own destiny with the new BU designation;

(5) the organization is willing to make whatever investments necessary to develop and expand the employee base; and

(6) he is confident and dedicated to making sure that the organization will succeed.

Principal support. In today's environment of quick fix, faddish, program-of-the-month changes, employees may be rightfully skeptical of the level of commitment that leaders (principals) in the organization will have for any new change. If the organization has initiated change efforts in the past that have been abandoned and/or been considered failures (such as was the recent history in this organization) then cynicism may exist throughout the organization. The principal support message is meant to convey that the leaders of the organization are committed to investing the time, energy, and resources necessary to push the change through the process to institutionalization. In the readiness speech, principal support was conveyed by the president's insistence on his commitment and his emphasis on the role that key managers had played in the change planning process and his sense of a high level of commitment in them. Broader principal support was also conveyed by having several other managers share in delivering parts of the readiness speech.

Personal valence. The question associated with personal valence is "what is in it for me?" If the changes that are to be implemented do not reveal that there is some value-added to the members of the change target, then resistance is likely to result. In the readiness speech, the president offered examples of both intrinsic and extrinsic valence. For example, he suggested that employees can take pride (intrinsic valence) in being part of a proven leader and with the changes to be implemented they will be part of a premier integrated IT organization. He also emphasized the potential employment stability and more direct control over their own destiny the new organization offered. Furthermore, he pointed out that increased opportunities for advancement and development were anticipated.

Change readiness assessment

As mentioned earlier, one of the plans for the BU's transition effort was a readiness assessment to be conducted early in the process. Assessment of readiness allows an organization to tailor further efforts to make change success more likely. There are four generic approaches to readiness assessment that organizations can use singly, in concert, or in multiple combinations. One assessment approach involves conducting an audit of the thoroughness of the change communication content (were all five message components addressed?) and strategies used (were attempts made to use more than just persuasive

communication?). The reflections generated for this paper are one example of this kind of assessment. A second approach to readiness assessment involves observing employees for behavior that will reveal their reactions. Like the first approach, observation is intended to be relatively unobtrusive. We suggest being attentive to rumors, increases in absence or turnover, or any unusual behavior one can associate with denial or resistance to change.

The third approach to assessment involves directly soliciting reactions from employees in one-on-one or small-group interviews. Local change agents should interview their employees about their reactions toward the change. In addition to helping gauge readiness and the effectiveness of communication efforts, this also provides a persuasive communication opportunity for the change agents.

A fourth, more formal assessment approach is to conduct an organizational survey consisting of Likert-response-type items and open-ended items. One or more instruments that assess cynicism (Reichers *et al.*, 1997) and/or commitment (Becker *et al.*, 1996) may serve as a model for such a survey. We are currently involved in an effort to construct a valid and reliable instrument for readiness assessment. Such a survey itself serves to share information and communicate about the change by reminding employees of specific issues and provides evidence of principal support. It also offers employees a form of active participation, via the suggestions they make, in the change effort. Early in our work with the organization, we argued for the importance of conducting an all-employee survey to test readiness and make good on promises to solicit employee ideas and suggestions.

Despite these advantages, the questionnaire-based readiness assessment is currently on hold in the BU. In part, our mismanagement of the introduction of the assessment idea probably played a role in its delay. In addition, because we were waiting for the change process to get well underway before assessing sentiments, the assessment effort has been overwhelmed by other events such as the economic troubles facing the IT industry.

Discussion

Our case summary described how the Armenakis *et al.* (1993, 1999) change message frameworks guided our initial efforts to help orchestrate, using three message conveying strategies, the communication of five key change message components for the purpose of creating readiness for a major reorganization. The frameworks guided our interactions with the client from the initial coaching of the president to the initial manager meetings designed to build local change agent support to the readiness speech. It is our hope that our description of our experience will encourage other change agents to focus on the communication aspects of change management more explicitly in their own efforts. As our case description attests, we feel the change message framework is highly useful and the reaction of the organizations that we have encouraged to use it has been very positive (even if their behaviors in using it have not always persisted).

As a result of our experiences with this IT organization, we have made some observations and learned lessons that will influence our change agent activities in the future and that also point out potential future research directions with regard to the Armenakis *et al.* models. While we have noted or alluded to some of these observations and lessons in our previous discussion, we would like to clarify them here and note some of their implications.

The change message and strategic vision

We were struck by the overlap between the components of the change message and the content of strategic visions. In a sense, strategic vision articulates a desired change from a current state to an ideal one. But an effective vision must include more than a goal, it must also be true to the culture and values of the organization and be presented vividly with "passion, emotion, and conviction" (Collins and Porras, 1996, p. 74). Oswald *et al.* (1994) have argued that to be effective visions must be salient (i.e. real and persuasive rather than just "words") to individuals. They suggest that salience is created by three factors: vision articulation, demonstrated shared leadership support for the vision, and the perceived appropriateness of the vision. Appropriateness in this broad sense might easily include the sentiments of discrepancy, efficacy, appropriateness, and valence discussed by Armenakis *et al.* (1993, 1999). This leads us to believe that the literature on the creation of leadership vision might benefit from an application of the five components of the change message framework. In addition, the change message framework might also benefit by an examination and application of the strategic vision literature.

Active participation and groups

Two observations were noted during the first management meeting that are worth sharing. First, we were confronted with the constraints group size places on active participation of the discussion and decision making forum we used. While there were very good reasons to have 24 people in the meeting, it did make participation in the decision making process more difficult. Future research would benefit from examining the impact of group size on efforts to engage the group in active participation.

While the large size made coordination and individual contributions more difficult, it did provide increased opportunities for sharing the experiences and learning with others. Social cognitive theory has long recognized that the reactions of others and interactions with them profoundly shape perception (e.g. Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978). In the management meetings, we were reminded of this fact as it became clear that a major component of their active participation was the sharing and discussion of insights with others. In their discussions of active participation, Armenakis *et al.* (1993, 1999) emphasize the psychological veracity of "self-discovered" insight but say little about gaining such insight with a group. While such insight is clearly key to the powerful persuasiveness of active participation, it became clear that this insight was often tested and refined in discussions with others participating. From these

observations, it seems that future research examining how individual and group-based active participation strategies differ with regard to the resultant readiness of the individuals involved are in order.

Persuasive communication

As a result of our efforts to help write the readiness speech, we learned some lessons about the challenges of using persuasive communication to send the various message components. First, most change is predicated on a "need" and that need is oftentimes straightforward and easily articulated. However, from the perspective of the BU president and managers, the most clear reason for the change was because corporate management had decreed it. "Because we said so," is generally not a persuasive articulation of discrepancy. In this case, we found that the discrepancy message was better articulated as "here is why change will be good" rather than the traditional "this is why we need to change." Theory and research that examines the different forms that discrepancy messages can take and the circumstances that make each most appropriate seem warranted based on our observations.

Second, it became clear to us that the best way to communicate appropriateness was to clarify the process by which the change direction had been set. This implies that decisions for how to plan change need to be made with consideration for likely perceptions of procedural justice (e.g. Folger and Konovsky, 1989). If the change agent cannot justify appropriateness with reference to the process used, then he or she must justify it based on other criteria that may be more suspect. The change message frameworks could benefit by incorporating more of the research and theory on procedural justice and the causes and consequences of justice sentiments.

Third, we learned that directly addressing change-specific efficacy by persuasive communication is difficult. It is difficult to "prove" a group can do a particular something it has never done before. Specific efficacy is probably best "communicated" through active participation, particularly its enactive mastery form, where individuals gradually build their skills and confidence. Using persuasive communication, more general efficacy is communicated through historical examples ("we succeeded at a similar challenge"), assessment of current skill and talent ("all of you are bright and highly motivated"), appeal to commitment ("I know we will do whatever it takes to succeed"), demonstrations of confidence ("I trust you to succeed"), and allusions to how the change was decided ("the group made the decision and they wouldn't have done so if they didn't think they could accomplish it").

Building (and losing) momentum

After helping with the readiness speech, our involvement with the organization in the case we described was greatly reduced. We had been asked only to help get the change underway and after determining the strategy, designing the structure and staffing it, and announcing those plans to employees, the momentum for the change was clearly underway. Unfortunately, our recent

conversations with the president and other members of the organization suggest that the day-to-day management of the transition itself coupled with a downturn in the economy and company's business (and some resulting staff reductions) had taken precedence over longer-term change management and orchestration of the change message.

We had not done a good enough job of institutionalizing the change-orchestrating role of the five message components for the approach to persist in our absence. One potential casualty might be the readiness assessment that is currently postponed. Because of a lack of orchestrating a communication effort using the five communication components, the organization has done things that appear to undermine some of the message in the readiness speech. The readiness speech was a watershed moment for the organization but the momentum it created was allowed to dissipate and it is now viewed as just an event.

Another thing that we believe may have hurt momentum was the lack of internalization of the change models by the management team. Through our coaching of the president, we feel that he recognized the utility of the change paradigm. However, the members of the management team were exposed to the model only during three meetings. None of them were personally coached. As a result, after the initial announcement of the change, it was easier for them to focus on dealing with the content of the change and neglect a larger concern for orchestrating a message and process. In this sense, the momentum for change communication and creating change-positive sentiments did not pass from the global change agent to the local change agents.

Conclusion

In sum, we hope our experiences and the observations we drew from them encourage change agents to apply the Armenakis *et al.* change communication models in their practice and encourage change researchers to expand theoretically and empirically our understanding of the models. Our experience suggests to us that the models have great potential for guiding the change efforts of organizations and for building readiness and promoting adoption and institutionalization.

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