Organizational Change Management Plan

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 The current business environment is uncertain, complex and dynamic, requiring the experts and leaders to benchmark, manage and handle these unpredicted external and internal situations (Sætren & Laumann, 2017). Celik and Ozsoy (2016) define change management as a process by which organizations constantly renew their capabilities, strategies, procedures, structures, technologies, and directions to realign operations and deal with the ever-changing needs in the marketplace. The change process allows the organization, teams, and individuals to transition from the current situation to the firm's anticipated future state to achieve the set objectives and remain competitive. As a leader of change in an organization that has acquired a small company and must integrate people and systems, it is vital to ensure that the change efforts lead to a successful transition. This research paper aims at using Kotter’s eight-step change process to create a plan for managing acquisition in NETCO, a fiction company.

**Managing Change in an Organizational Using Kotter’s Eight-Step Change Process**

 Aligning the change in a company with the right change model is critical because it can help leaders and workers realize the desired outcomes while addressing the challenges or complexities associated with the change (Jordan, 2019). Kotter’s eight-step change model is a well-known framework that practitioners and leaders use to implement change in an organization since it is straightforward and simple to apply (Kang et al., 2020). It consists of eight steps which are discussed below.

**Creating a Sense of Urgency for Acquisition**

 Change necessitates extra effort and informs workers and other stakeholders of the urgent need for change to prepare for it. NETCO was encountering diminishing revenues, stiff competition, and market changes affecting its operations and its ability to promptly satisfy customers’ needs (Jordan, 2019). As a result, there was an urgent need for change to help the company attain profit and become more competitive, which made its leader opt for acquisition as the best strategy to increase the technological advancement of NETCO so that production could be enhanced and delivery time minimized. The acquisition would help the firm get new capabilities and know-how, and access to the technology needed to grow its market share. By explaining to employees and managers about the sad state of the status quo leading to poor firm performance, they are likely to understand the challenges the company faces and see why the change is necessary to improve future work. In this step, the leader should ensure that every member is involved feel the need for change to gain maximum support, keep the momentum of the change initiative and attain lasting transformation.

 The strategy to use in this step is to create a forum to discuss the organization's issues and threats and then allow the employees and other stakeholders to offer possible solutions. Employees and managers should be allowed to talk directly and regularly with unhappy customers, suppliers, and other stakeholders to understand their concerns, which can be an eye-opener for why change is necessary. The leader should ensure honest and clear communication to gain the commitment of stakeholders for the change effort.

**Building a Powerful Guiding Coalition**

 Since a leader cannot implement the change independently, establishing a team is required to guide and lead the firm through the acquisition process. The team should be characterized by members with the right skills, reputation, qualification, connection and power to offer leadership and influence stakeholders throughout the change process (Kang et al., 2020). The leader of NETCO should develop an effective team composed of a sponsor or an executive leader who can provide the needed resources to undertake the acquisition initiative. The team should also be made of managers with sufficient authority in the area of decision-making. These members should be able to gather relevant resources to support the project. They are also responsible for coming up with strategies and vision, removing obstacles and resolving conflicts. Other members are the supervisors and managers whose responsibility is to ensure successful and timely completion of tasks. They also design the change programs to focus on the achievement of the set plan. A leader in NETCO should ensure that the change team has a shared understanding of the need for change. The group should also have a universal mission, purpose, objectives and goals to ensure that the change goes as planned. According to Gupta (2011), the guiding coalition should understand the challenges and risks linked with the change initiative and use their knowledge and intelligence to overcome these issues for successful change to occur.

 The strategy in this step is to give the teams enough organizational power and resources to work on behalf of the senior leaders by leading the change effort and keeping it going. The leader should give the teams ownership and inspire them to be accountable and open-minded to solve certain problems during the change process (Gleeson, 2017). Empowerment and inclusion help opens new ideas because the team members become change agents whereby they air their views and opinions of how they expect the firm to be in the future. Through this, the leader encourages the team psychologically and physically by giving them autonomy to engage in this change process.

**Forming a Change Vision and Strategy**

 This step involves creating a sensible vision to guide the change initiative and developing effective strategies that can help team members achieve the vision (Jordan, 2019). It gives a picture of how the organization will look like in the future after executing the change. It also tells stakeholders why they should let go the past affairs and put more effort into the present and follow senior leaders into the future. To correctly develop a change vision and strategy, the change leader and the guiding coalition in NETCO are responsible for setting the direction that should be followed. The leader should create a desirable and feasible vision in the eyes of employees and managers to be motivated to make the necessary sacrifices that best meet their interests and that of the organization. Due to this, the change leader and the guiding team should frequently meet to develop consensus until an initial shared vision is developed (Kang et al., 2020). The aim is to foster a sense of shared ownership over the entire process. The vision should reflect what NETCO wants to be in the future after acquiring the technological firm. Thus, the leader should concentrate on the long-term aspiration of the company when deciding on the kind of organization to acquire. Since many technology companies can be acquired, it is in the best interest of the company that the leader and the guiding coalition should review target firms that will help achieve the new vision. They should evaluate the extent to which the resources, machines, equipment, and knowledge in the acquired firm complement NETCO.

 The employees' ideas should be used when developing the vision to make it acceptable by employees. The vision should be easily communicated and understood by everyone (Tanner, 2021). It should also incorporate data like market research, forecast and business strengths. A successful vision should be better than the previous one and identify the change areas, offer a clear and realistic target to measure success and attract the long-term of NETCO’s stakeholders.

**Communicating the Vision**

 This step involves utilizing all communication channels to convey the vision and strategies to employees and other stakeholders (Jordan, 2019). A successful acquisition will only be possible when employees buy-in and move in the same direction as the senior leaders and the change coalition. Therefore, the leader should use emails, small and large group meetings, company intranet and written communications to ensure that the vision is well understood and accepted by all members (Gupta, 2011). The goal is to capture the minds and hearts of workers to motivate them to make sacrifices that support the initiative. The vision should reveal future benefits that are acceptable by employees and the organization. With the help of the coalition, the leader should use simple words when communicating the vision to eliminate doubts and confusion. The communication should be as frequent as possible, and the leader should lead by example to demonstrate the behaviors that workers should adopt (Bejinariu et al., 2017). Likewise, employees should be allowed to share their views and opinions.

 The strategy for this step is that the leader should promote feedback from all workers, which will help address their problems, concerns and anxiety honestly and openly. As such, the leader should encourage two-way communication instead of the top-down approach only. The leader should treat employees and managers as active contributors and not captive of the change initiative. Through open communication and continuous feedback, the input of workers can help in shaping the change implementation. The leaders should also use stories, examples and other verbal pictures that effectively communicate the expected change.

**Removing Obstacles and Barriers to Action**

 When executing organizational-wide change, barriers may occur often. They include change resistance by workers, culture clash, insufficient processes, disempowered managers, restrictive policies, and incompatible structures (Kansal & Chandani, 2014). Involving analysts and specialists with certain expertise and independent goals can lead to fragmented views, making it difficult to integrate the perspective (Jemison & Sitkin, 1986). Additionally, the acquirer and the acquired may be unable to resolve crucial areas of ambiguity before completing the agreement. Also, increasing speed to close the deal may lead to premature closure, thus reducing the time needed to tackle the integration issues. The leader of NETCO will need to understand different barriers and obstacles that can affect the change by playing an active role in the acquisition process. The leader should search for ways to balance between different interests and groups to guarantee a shared set of analyses. Achieving commonness will increase the chances of successful change implementation. Before choosing the company to acquire, the leader should ensure the existence of an organizational and strategic fit between the two companies by matching their cultures, administrative systems and demographic characteristics. Open communication with employees and all stakeholders can help identify barriers and ensure that the company’s reward systems, processes, policies and strategies align with the new vision.

 This step aims to empower workers to successfully do their best and face challenges by equipping them with the right mentoring, coaching, and training. Through training and development, the employees will use their newly learned skills to implement change (Weber, 2015). With the help of a guiding coalition, the leader should develop the reward system, performance evaluation and firm procedures and structure to support the change to ensure its longevity.

**Identifying a Short-Term Win**

 Carrying out a large-scale change may be detrimental due to many activities involves with no early success. Due to this, the leader of this company should sustain the change effort by generating short0term wins with the help of a guiding coalition. Early success motivates employees and helps in maintaining commitment. However, the short-term wins must meet the criteria of having an ambiguous success, be visible throughout the firm and be clearly linked to the change effort. The aim is to prevent loss of momentum and to keep people engaged. The acquisition process may take time which necessitates patience. With the help of short-term wins, employees are less discouraged by the slow pace of the change implementation process. The short-term wins should also lead to increased revenue, significant costs saving, more streamlined procedures and effective use of technology to improve organizational operations.

 The organizational resources should be properly utilized to fulfill short-term activities, unlike long-term ones. Due to this, maintaining the hard work of employees by identifying and appreciating their effort is important. It requires the leader to create a reward system that is responsible for acknowledging quick wins on workers. However, the leader should always ensure that change project breakdown leads to feasible short-term activities that can result in short-term goals (Stauffer, 2008).

**Consolidating Improvements**

 As change continues, employees and managers may sometimes lose their urgency sense and experience burnout or go back to their old routines. To prevent such a situation from occurring, the leader should continuously monitor tasks to guarantee that everyone remains passionate (Kang et al., 2020). Sustaining the change implementation requires the leader to motivate employees to work persistently toward achieving the new vision while measuring achievement. The leader should ensure that the team does not declare success prematurely after achieving quick wins. Instead, after every win, the leader should know what went wrong and plan how to improve the areas before proceeding to the next activities. Doing so will avoid skipping keys tasks that are crucial for the change to be successful. Any unnecessary processes and procedures should be identified and removed.

 Through communication and actions, the leader can maintain an optimal urgency level for the change effort. The leader can also use his organizational power to get rid of unnecessary interdependencies and remind employees why past actions are no longer viable for the firm’s future. The guiding coalition should work closely with managers in the company to identify and remove hindrance that may affect the effort of workers. Where necessary, additional resources should be allocated to the change effort. The leader should keep in mind that it is difficult to sustain change without identifying and removing barriers in the existing policies and processes.

**Anchoring the Change**

 In this stage, the leader should nurture a new culture that involves integrating the cultures in the two companies. Cultural integration should be addressed so that it applies at all levels of the company and is taken seriously at all acquisition process stages (Hennayake, 2017). By assessing the culture, the leader should act as a middle man to identify what is favorable for the two companies to work collaboration even if it involves removing some detrimental factors to the change effort.

 The leader should start assessing synergies by selecting a smaller group from the parent company to investigate and understand the acquired one and then increase integration by discussing the expected working norms in both companies with team members and employees. Other required changes include values, norms, processes, systems and other infrastructural components to ensure that every component of the firm aligns with the new direction. The leader, in this case, should be able to make difficult decisions such as removing people who are hindering progress. Positive results brought by the change efforts are also expected to help employees in accepting the new status. The leader should discuss these results to prove to employees how the acquisition benefits them and the firm.

**Conclusion**

 From the discussion above, Kotter's eight-change model was critical in preparing a change management plan for NETCO. The company wanted to acquire a small technology firm. The entire acquisition process required the leader to use specific actions and steps to navigate the strategic change. By creating urgency, building a guiding team, creating and communicating vision and strategies, empowering vision by getting rid of obstacles and identifying short-term wins, the leader would help shift employees' minds towards the change. The leader would also sustain the change efforts by consolidating improvements and supporting the change cultural change.

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