

Running Head: THE CREATION AND MAINTENANCE OF MOTIVATION IN ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

The Creation and Maintenance of Motivation in Organizational Change

Hannah DeZeeuw

Vanderbilt University

According to Yukl (2006), the creation and maintenance of motivation is an essential part of the process to achieve an organizational transformation. Because of the difficulties and setbacks that occur in a transformation's long transition period, employees feel extra stress and frustration (Yukl 2006). Yukl (2006) writes, "Major change is always stressful and painful for people, especially when it involves a prolonged transition period of adjustment, disruption, and dislocation" (p. 305). This challenging context requires motivation in order to mobilize and maintain enthusiastic support for organizational change (Yukl 2006). A long term transition with these challenges is the transformation context addressed in Kotter's (2007) article "Leading Change," which provides an eight step process to achieve a transformation. Kotter's (2007) eight step process is a critical way to create and maintain the motivation which Yukl (2006) argues as necessary to effect successful organizational change.

Kotter's (2007) first three steps create motivation. The establishment of a sense of urgency motivates through fear – change champions convince others that maintaining the current state of the organization is more risky for organization survival than immediately experimenting with a new strategy or vision. The second step, in which powerful players support and guide through the transformation, motivates others because it makes the transformation appear possible rather than an unreachable ideal; it becomes possible because powerful players can provide the necessary resources for large scale change. A clear vision, the third step, provides an overarching goal or at least a direction toward which people are motivated. Without a clear vision, people become confused and alienated, which leads to loss of motivation.

The final five steps of Kotter's (2007) plan maintain motivation, which can be easily lost in the lengthy period required of transformations. Constant reinforcement of the vision through daily communications and executive behavior motivates others because employees witness

leader's commitment to the change. Yukl (2006) states that support for the transformation will be lost without leaders' continued commitment. Kotter's (2007) fifth step, removal of organizational obstacles, especially those related to the bureaucracy of an organization, also maintains motivation; without obstacles, employees can be empowered to implement the change (Kotter 2007; Yukl 2006). Through its ability to increase employee confidence, the creation and celebration of short-term wins also maintains motivation (Yukl 2006). Change champions can then leverage this established confidence from small wins in order to tackle larger problems (Yukl 2006). Kotter (2007) also emphasizes that leaders must avoid declaration of premature victory in order to keep employees' focus on the greater goal. In other words, if victory were to be declared, motivation would cease. Lastly, leaders maintain motivation as they incorporate the transformation into the organizational culture. Through a discussion of "the way we do things around here," leaders highlight the positive effect of the transformation on organizational success. Through the promotion of employees who have been dedicated to the change, leaders encourage others to also dedicate themselves. Both activities heavily encourage current employees and new recruits to maintain the behaviors involved in the transformation.

Kotter's (2007) eight step process to effect organizational transformation is successful because it creates and maintains the motivation of employees. This motivation has been deemed a critical component for victorious organizational change (Yukl 2006). As previously referenced, Kotter's (2007) specific methods also incorporate aspects of Yukl's (2006) people-oriented action theory – general concepts, such as self confidence and empowerment, intended to create and maintain motivation. Within today's ever-changing business environment, the ability of a leader to achieve organizational change will determine his or her organization's survival

over the long term (Kotter 2007; Connor 1992). Using Kotter's (2007) methods to create and maintain motivation, the essential major organizational change can be realized.

Works Cited

Connor, D. R. (1992). *Managing at the speed of change: How resilient managers succeed and prosper where others fail*. New York: Villard Books.

Kotter, J. P. (2007). Leading Change. *Harvard Business Review*, 85(1), 96-103.

Yukl, G. (2006). *Leadership in organizations*. Upper Saddle River: Pearson Prentice Hall.