



Chapter 9

Organisation transformation and change

Learning objectives

- To describe organisation transformation
- To identify the internal and external disruptions which may demand the need for change
- To describe integrated strategic change (ISC)
- To distinguish between mechanistic and organic organisation design
- To understand the relationship between 'organisation culture' and 'organisation effectiveness'
- To demonstrate an understanding of organisation culture, how it is diagnosed and how it is changed

Activities

Review questions

(See text p. 350)

1 Define 'organisation transformation'. How is it different from organisation development?

Organisation transformation (OT) can occur in response to or in anticipation of major changes in an organisation's environment or technology. In addition, these changes are often associated with significant alterations in the firm's business strategy, which, in turn, may require modifying corporate culture as well as internal structures and processes in order to support the new direction.

Such fundamental change entails a new paradigm for organising and managing organisations. It involves qualitatively different ways of perceiving, thinking and behaving in organisations and requires top managers to take an active leadership role. The change process is characterised by considerable innovation and learning, and it continues almost indefinitely as organisation members discover new ways to improve the organisation and adapt it to changing conditions.

Organisation transformation is a recent advance in organisation development, and there is some confusion about its meaning and definition. It goes far beyond making the existing organisation better or fine-tuning the status quo. OT deals with

fundamentally altering the assumptions underlying how an organisation relates to its environment and functions. Changing these assumptions entails significant shifts in corporate philosophy and values and in the numerous structures and organisational arrangements that shape members' behaviours. Not only is the magnitude of change greater, but the change fundamentally alters the qualitative nature of the organisation.

OT interventions are still in a formative stage of development. For example, organisation learning was originally discussed in the late 1950s, but did not reach prominence until the early 1990s. In contrast, the following should be noted about OD:

- OD applies to an entire system, such as an organisation, a single plant of a multi-plant firm, a department or work group.
- OD is based on behavioural science knowledge and practice, including micro concepts, such as leadership, group dynamics and work design, and macro approaches, such as strategy, organisation design and international relations.
- OD is concerned with planned change. It is typically neither associated with business planning or technological innovation in the formal sense, nor with organisation evolution in the deterministic sense.
- OD involves both the creation and subsequent reinforcement of change.
- OD encompasses strategy, structure and process changes, although different OD programs may focus on certain kinds of change.
- OD is oriented to improving organisational effectiveness.

Note: The differences between OD and OT were also discussed in Chapter 1.

2 *What are the environmental and internal disruptions that can affect an organisation? Give current examples of each and explain why you selected them as examples.*

Internal and/or external disruptions can trigger organisation transformation. Since transformational change involves altering the majority of an organisation's features, this kind of change should not be continuous. In most cases, the change is disruptive, and organisations usually experience or perceive a threat to their survival, except for organisations operating in highly unstable and volatile environments. For example, firms operating in intensely competitive, high technology industries, such as the telecommunications industry, may find themselves undergoing major transformational change on a regular basis to keep up with enormous external pressures.

A struggling company needs to attempt to transform itself continually until it achieves the winning formula. Ideally, careful diagnosis and planning should minimise the number of times this needs to be repeated.

In mergers or acquisitions, transformational change is essential to join two previously autonomous corporate cultures successfully. This is a highly complex task requiring radical change to systems, structures, processes and often the mix of people. Failure to manage this transformation successfully can be extremely costly and could possibly result in business failure.

A key internal disruption can be the appointment of a new CEO or board. The disruption may be caused by the management style, or the need to respond quickly to changes in the market place.

Other triggers for organisation transformation may include government regulation, privatisation, changes in organisation size, the introduction of new technology, changes in product or industry life cycle, new entrants to the marketplace and high executive turnover.

Arrange students in small groups and ask them to identify current examples either within their sector or from information in the general business news:

- 1 Industry discontinuities – sharp changes in legal, political, economic and technological conditions that shift the basis for competition within an industry.
- 2 Product life cycle shifts – changes in product life cycle that require different business strategies.
- 3 Internal company dynamics – changes in size, corporate portfolio strategy or executive turnover.

These disruptions severely jolt organisations and push them to question their business strategy and, in turn, their mission, values, structure, systems and procedures.

3 What are the key features of integrated strategic change (ISC) and how are they related to each other?

ISC was designed to be a highly participative, deliberate and coordinated approach to change management. It has three key features:ⁱ

- 1 The relevant unit of analysis is the organisation's strategic orientation, comprising its strategy and organisation design. Strategy and the design that supports it must be considered as an integrated whole.
- 2 Creating the strategic plan, gaining commitment and support for it, planning its implementation and executing it are treated as one integrated process. The ability to repeat such a process quickly and effectively when conditions

warrant is valuable, rare and difficult to imitate. Thus, a strategic change capability represents a sustainable competitive advantage.ⁱⁱ

- 3 Individuals and groups throughout the organisation are integrated into the analysis, planning and implementation process to create a more achievable plan, to maintain the organisation's strategic focus, to direct attention and resources on the organisation's key competencies, to improve co-ordination and integration within the organisation and to create higher levels of shared ownership and commitment.

4 Explain what is meant by 'organisation design'? What difficulties would you expect if you intended to change an organisation in this manner?

Organisation design is one of three interventions used in transformational change. Organisation design addresses the different elements that comprise the 'architecture' of the organisation, including structure, work design, human resources practices, and management and information systems. It seeks to fit or align these components with each other so they direct members' behaviours in a strategic direction.

The organisation's design is described by the structure, work design, information system and human resources system. Other models for understanding the organisation's strategic orientation include the competitive positioning modelⁱⁱⁱ and other typologies.^{iv}

When undertaking strategic analysis it is important to consider both the current strategy and organisational design which must be aligned and changed together to respond to external and internal disruptions.

When exercising strategic choice, the different sets of strategies and objectives also include projections about the organisation design changes that will be necessary to support each alternative.

The important issue for change managers is that transformational change involves the whole organisation, even if the systems and procedures across the whole organisation are not directly involved. Change to the organisation design should not be undertaken in isolation from the other interventions required for successful change.

5 Explain the difference between 'mechanistic' and 'organic' design and give examples.

Mechanistic designs are characterised by specialised tasks where employees are grouped together for maximum efficiency and which are rigidly defined and organised into functional departments with minimal decision making authority. They are also characterised by strict hierarchies and authority where knowledge,

especially IT systems, and control are centralised with hierarchical communication flowing downward through the chain of command. A mechanistic design supports an organisation strategy emphasising cost minimisation, such as might be found at Target and McDonald's or other businesses competing on price.

Human resources practices are geared towards selecting people to fit specific jobs and training them periodically when the need arises. Employees are paid on the basis of the job they perform, share a standard set of fringe benefits and achieve merit raises based on their individual performance.

When taken together, all of these design elements direct organisational behaviour towards efficiency and cost minimisation.

Conversely, organic design is characterised by common tasks and interdependencies, in which tasks are adjusted and redefined as needed and aimed at employee motivation. Here, there is less adherence to formal authority, policies and rules. Most of the knowledge management is decentralised and employees have control over their own decisions. Usually there are diffused channels in network communications. Organic design supports an organisation strategy aimed at innovation, such as might be found at 3M, Apple and Intel.

All the design elements are geared to getting employees directly involved in the innovation process, facilitating interaction among them, developing and rewarding their knowledge and expertise and providing them with relevant and timely information.

Organic organisations tend to have flat, lean and flexible structures. The focus is on enriched jobs and self-managed teams. Human resources practices focus on attracting, motivating and retaining talented employees. They send a strong signal that employees' knowledge and expertise are key sources of competitive advantage. Members are selected to fit an organisation culture valuing participation, teamwork and invention. Training and development are intense and continuous. Members are rewarded for learning multiple skills, have choices about fringe benefits and gain merit pay based on the business success of their work unit.

Management practices are highly participative and promote employee involvement. In summary, these design choices guide members' behaviours towards change and innovation.

For more information, students should be referred to Table 9.1, p. 334.

6 Define organisational culture. What are the major elements at different levels of awareness?

Organisational culture is the pattern of assumptions, values and norms shared by organisation members. A growing body of research has shown that culture can affect strategy formulation and implementation as well as a firm's ability to achieve high levels of performance. Culture change involves helping senior executives and administrators to diagnose existing culture and make necessary alterations in the basic assumptions and values that underlie organisational behaviours.

Corporate/organisational culture refers to the culture of a certain corporate institution or organisation, encompassing a variety of aspects including corporate vision, mission statement, values, policies, procedures, internal politics, communication, reward systems and traditions (e.g. celebrations).

Organisational culture includes four major elements existing at different levels of awareness:

- Artefacts refer to the observable behaviours and physical elements such as structures, systems, policies and procedures.
- Norms dictate the generally accepted mode of behaviour in varying situations.
- Values define what is important and should be prioritised.
- Basic assumptions are the shared way in which people in the organisation 'perceive, think and feel' about aspects of their external environment.

Refer students to Figure 9.3 p. 339.

7 What is the relationship between 'organisational culture' and 'organisation effectiveness'?

There is a presumed impact of organisational culture on the effectiveness of the firm. A well-conceived and well-managed organisational culture, closely linked to an effective business strategy, can mean the difference between success and failure in today's demanding environments. Indirectly, culture affects performance through its influence on the organisation's ability to implement change. A particular pattern of values and assumptions that once was a source of strength for a company can become a major liability in successfully implementing a new strategy.^v

Case studies of organisation transformation are full of accounts where the change failed because the culture did not support the new strategy, including AT&T's failed integration of NCR, Daimler-Benz's troubles with Chrysler and Prudential Insurance's difficulties in diversifying into other financial services.

Multinationals may face problems doing business in other countries, especially when their corporate culture does not fit with the national culture. For example,

Starbucks learned this when it had to close 70% of its Australian stores. Australia has an entrenched coffee culture ranging from independents to local brands like Hudsons, which US-styled Starbucks found hard to enter. Customers were accustomed to stronger coffee brews brought in by European immigrants.

The growing appreciation that culture can play a significant role in implementing new strategy has fuelled interest in the topic, especially in those organisations needing to adapt to turbulent environments.

Discussion and essay questions

(See text pp. 350-1)

1 ‘OT is revolutionary whereas OD is evolutionary.’ Discuss.

OT deals with fundamentally altering the assumptions underlying how an organisation relates to its environment and functions. Changing these assumptions entails significant shifts in corporate philosophy and values and in the numerous structures and organisational arrangements that shape members’ behaviours. Not only is the magnitude of change greater, but the change fundamentally alters the qualitative nature of the organisation. OT is about doing different things.

OD however, focuses on the ongoing development of the organisation. Sometimes this will be through incremental changes which are designed to meet those daily/monthly/annual changes internally and external to the organisation. OD is about doing the same things differently.

Sometimes a stage of stability in OD is punctuated by the need for transformation in one or more areas of the organisation. This is called ‘punctuated equilibrium’ and is sometimes considered the usual state of change for most organisations.^{vi}

Note: The differences between OD and OT were also discussed in Question 1 of this IM.

2 ‘It is impossible to dramatically change an organisation’s culture.’ Do you agree or disagree? Explain your answer.

No, it is quite possible to dramatically change the culture of an organisation, but in some cases it may take time. For example when Australia Post was transformed from an archaic bureaucratic organisation with out-dated customer service ideas to a modern organisation responsive to customer service, the process took 15 years. For most it is not as drawn out and usually if the change manager, the CEO or other senior leader has influence, then the culture change can be positive and swift.

Sometimes the speed of culture change will depend on the readiness of the organisation for change, the perception of participants about the need for culture change and the place of the organisation in the environment.

The depth of change may also be in response to other OT being undertaken. If the organisation is changing what it does quite dramatically then there is likely to be a requirement for an accompanying culture change.

3 *Is there one best way to diagnose organisational culture? Argue both sides of the question and provide an informed opinion.*

No, there are three different yet complementary perspectives used when diagnosing organisational culture: the behavioural approach, the competing values approach and the deep assumption approach. Each diagnostic perspective focuses on particular aspects of organisational culture and together the approaches can provide a comprehensive assessment of these complex phenomena.

The behavioural approach provides specific descriptions about how tasks are performed and how relationships are managed in an organisation. Sometimes it is described as a surface level approach. Refer to Table 9.2, p. 343.

The competing values approach suggests that an organisation's culture can be understood in terms of two important 'value pairs'; each pair consists of contradictory values placed at opposite ends of a continuum, as shown in Figure 9.3, p. 339. The two value pairs are (1) internal focus and integration versus external focus and differentiation and (2) flexibility and discretion versus stability and control. Organisations continually struggle to satisfy the conflicting demands placed on them by these competing values.

The deep assumptions approach emphasises the deepest level of the organisation which are not generally examined. These are the tacit and shared understandings between employees about how things happen in the organisation – 'how we do things here'.

Students should be able to give examples of when they would use each type of diagnosis, identify the internal and external environments and the catalyst for change.

4 *It is said that 'diagnosing organisational culture at the deep assumptions level poses at least three difficult problems for collecting pertinent information'. What are the three difficulties referred to? How might they be addressed?*

Diagnosing organisation culture at the deep assumptions level poses at least three difficult problems for collecting pertinent information.^{vii} First, culture reflects the

more or less shared assumptions about what is important, how things are done and how people should behave in organisations. People generally take cultural assumptions for granted and rarely speak of them directly. Rather, the company's culture is implied in concrete behavioural examples, such as daily routines, stories, rituals and language.

Sometimes the values and beliefs that people espouse have little to do with the ones they really hold and follow. People are reluctant to admit this discrepancy, yet somehow the real assumptions underlying idealised portrayals of culture must be discovered.

There are likely to be several subcultures in large diverse organisations. They could include countercultures going against the grain of the wider organisation culture. Assumptions may not be shared widely and may differ across groups in the organisation. The change agent cannot afford to focus on limited parts of the organisation or on a few select individuals as a distorted view of the organisation's culture and subcultures may be seen. All relevant groups in the organisation must be identified and their cultural assumptions sampled. Only then can practitioners judge the extent to which assumptions are shared widely.

5 'Cultural change can raise significant tensions between organisation and individual interests, resulting in ethical and legal problems for practitioners.' Discuss.

Guidelines for cultural change include: aspects such as clear strategic vision, top-management commitment, symbolic leadership, supporting organisational changes, selection and socialisation of newcomers and termination of those with different views, and ethical and legal sensitivity.^{viii}

Cultural change can raise significant tensions between organisational and individual interests, resulting in ethical and legal problems for practitioners. This is particularly pertinent when organisations are trying to implement cultural values that promote employee integrity, control, equitable treatment and job security – values often included in cultural change efforts.

Good preparation and planning will guarantee that senior management ensures full compliance with ethical and legal obligations, implicit and explicit, throughout the change process. All promises need to be kept, open communication needs to be maintained, diversity needs to be valued, trust and teamwork need to be espoused, individuals need to be recognised and empowered, and there needs to be a system of resolution in place in the event of employee dissatisfaction. These actions are likely to include legal obligations concerning employment; it is always wise to have an HR practitioner involved in change projects to consider proposed change activities from an HR perspective and to ensure that process is followed.

Additional activity

Have students review the definitions of OD and OT as discussed in Chapter 1 and Review Question 1 of this chapter.

Divide students into small groups. Have them identify ethical consideration which arose in a particular change process and the related legal challenges e.g. employment, personal grievance. After, each group should present their conclusions to the entire class.

Applications—Critical thinking questions

These questions are ideal for organising students into groups of three to five to debate the issues. You could extend the debate by being flexible and responsive to their comments. There are no right or wrong answers for these questions as they are intended to challenge students to think about how theory might be applied to actual organisations and situations.

9.1 Reader's Digest chief shakes up the empire**1 What form of disruption stimulated the reorganisation at Reader's Digest?**

The catalyst for change was twofold, firstly a new CEO was appointed and secondly, it was moving into a dynamic publishing environment which was being challenged by online and e-publishing.

2 What significant changes have happened at Reader's Digest since this interview? What benefits and difficulties are they now facing?

Refer students to the Readers Digest website www.readersdigest.com.au and <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/mediatechnologyandtelecoms/7265161/Readers-Digest-a-teacher-and-a-friend.html> which gives a 2010 account of the financial state largely based on the declining popularity of middlebrow content and the inability of the UK company to sustain its pension liability.

An example of the new 2011 approach for Reader's Digest can be seen at <http://finance.yahoo.com/news/Readers-Digest-Partners-With-iw-1618898250.html?x=0&.v=1> which describes an online health portal.

9.2 Managing strategic change at Foster's Group**1 Ian Johnston has now had time to establish himself within the company. What significant changes have resulted from his implementation of the review? What problems do you expect will occur and how may they be overcome?**

Ian Johnston has made changes in several areas based on a comprehensive study of the structure of the wine industry, business strategy, organisational design, operational capabilities and efficiencies, and economic and financial performance.

The review recommended that the wine business be retained but remodelled with major organisational and operational changes to be taken into effect. The business would be divided into wine and beer divisions. This would give the new wine operational leadership team, which was hired to implement the review's outcomes, a clearer focus, organisational simplicity, financial transparency and performance accountability.

Ian Johnston's planning and preparation for change was strong but never the less Foster's can expect some challenges with the change in structure and design, which had lacked clear direction. The culture needed to change to a more aggressive and well informed sales force and with an expanded new team. New teams inherently bring with them new ways of doing business and new cultures develop.

2 The review split the wine and beer divisions. What steps need to be taken to ensure vertical co-ordination?

Restructuring resulted in the separation of the brand divisions of beer and wine including the divestment of a number of vineyards and three wineries were closed. Foster's was being exposed to a considerable amount of disruption and Ian Johnston needed to ensure that both divisions of the company were aligned vertically. The steps he took included incorporating global supply operations within their relevant demand regions. This would create autonomous business units comprising sales, marketing, supply and functional support for each region. The same structure of autonomous business units was to be implemented in the beer division to ensure co-ordination across the firm.

Further, a futures strategy to improve outcomes for the business was developed. An 18 month plan was presented to the board detailing a program that focused on improving growth, efficiency and capabilities across the wine group. Students should be encouraged to seek out more information from www.fostersgroup.com/about/overview.aspx

The next move for Foster's has been to consider a demerger. This is another important step as they investigate the benefits of pursuing a demerger of the company to create separately listed entities for wine and beer.

The outcome of this proposal could fundamentally re-shape Foster's – extending a process begun 18 months ago to separate the beer and wine business structures and re-integrate production and sales capability. Every aspect of the potential demerger will be investigated – the costs, benefits and logistics – to understand and subsequently recommend the next step for the company.

3 *Analyse the emergence of the new strategy in terms of the preceding discussion. Were all steps followed? Do they appear to have been effective?*

Excellent planning for change was undertaken. The process was preceded by an extensive review with resulting recommendations being actioned. The recommendations were followed carefully and completely and, given the proposal to demerge, the divisions appear to have been successful in turning around the wine business.

9.3 *Coles retailer revitalises itself*

1 *What has been the main focus of the restructure at Coles? Has this focus changed over time?*

The main focus of the Coles revitalisation has been through revamping its brands, the supply chain and training its managers. Ian McLeod, the CEO appointed in 2008, made dramatic changes in the way customers were perceived, instilling an element of trust in employees. The new culture was to embed the idea that the customer is paramount.

McLeod commenced an OD program which included a new management team to transform the company. The company is once more training managers and bureaucracy has been trimmed back, but the supermarkets now have an extra 8000 staff. 'Mystery shoppers' are contracted to visit the stores every three months to measure queuing times and management leadership programs have been established.

House brands, which are more profitable as they don't require marketing spend, have been reorganised and restructured. The supply chain has also been revamped and distribution centres have been halved from 40 to 20, a decision made by the previous administration, and is now starting to show results with lower costs and delivery effectiveness. Fresh food can be ordered and delivered quickly, reflecting what consumers want in their stores. The end shopping experience is also being altered: softer lighting, wider aisles and lower shelving to make the products more accessible.

The change over time has extended to Coles developing a corporate social responsibility policy focusing on sustainability.

2 *How is Woolworths, the other Australian supermarket giant, responding to these changes? How are the smaller chains responding?*

Woolworths has responded in its customer service and with the opening of its first 'green store' in 2007.

Students can be divided into groups to identify how each of the leading supermarkets are competing.

Smaller chains, such as Aldi Sud have also responded and in some areas, such as supplier relationships, lead the way. They do not however, embellish the customer experience but demonstrate low cost brand recognition.

3 *What are the three steps in organisation design? Do you see these steps reflected in the article above?*

There are three highly interactive steps to organisational design which must fit together and reinforce each other to promote a high performance organisation.

Firstly there is clarifying the design focus. This preliminary stage involves assessing the organisation to create the overall framework for design. It starts with examining the organisation's strategy and objectives and determining what organisation capabilities are needed to achieve them. A gap analysis is undertaken and identifies current problems that the design intervention should address, which design elements will receive the most attention, and the likely magnitude and time frame of the design process.

Secondly, designing the organisation. This key step in organisation design involves configuring the design components to support the organisation's strategy and objectives. The design process addresses the specific details of the components, which involves generating alternatives and making specific design choices.

Thirdly, implementing the design. The final step involves making the new design happen by putting into place the new structures, practices and systems. It draws heavily on the methods for leading and managing change and applies them to the entire organisation or sub-unit and not just limited parts. Because organisation design generally involves large amounts of transformational change, this intervention can place heavy demands on the organisation's resources and leadership expertise.

Organisation designs cannot usually be implemented in one step but must proceed in phases that involve considerable transition management as was described in the Coles example above.

9.4 Culture change at McDonald's

1 *How did McDonald's transform itself?*

The McDonald's example illustrates how important cultural principles are used to shape behaviour during a period of organisational growth and how culture can be used to facilitate changes. McDonald's did this through going back to the fundamentals and finding out what customers wanted to eat.

They found that customers were more interested in health and, consequently, eating habits were changing. This resulted in McDonald's introducing nutritional labelling on products and a healthier choice menu.

McDonald's also spent \$200 million on an investment program which went into opening 40 restaurants and refurbishing established restaurants so they can offer made-to-order menus and stay open 24 hours.

The focus for McDonald was addressing the consumer's change in food values.

2 In your opinion, should McDonald's consider further transformation? Explain your answer.

This is a good opportunity to get students to debate the pros and cons of fast food and how the industry has changed the way Australia – and almost every other nation – eats. The discussion would include the continuing change in what, when and how we eat.

3 What changes in corporate culture were likely to be involved in this transformation? Would those changes have been difficult to introduce given McDonald's long, historical association with a fast-food, hamburger-based image?

Changes to the corporate culture include a focus on made-to-order and healthy food options. The consumer demand drove the culture change to reflect the general move towards healthy eating. The style of food has been important with the inclusion of wraps, smoothies and apples. Employees have needed to change from a culture founded on pre-prepared and standardised, to make-as-you-go and individualised choice.

The changes were likely to be challenging. Along with an entrenched culture which focused on the burger, McDonald's has a young and mobile workforce for whom customer service training would be necessary.

Additional reading

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(a classic reader for those involved in managing change)

Deal, T and Kennedy, A.A., (1982) *Corporate Cultures. The Rites and Rituals of Corporate Life*. Addison-Wesley Publishing, Reading, Mass.
(the Classic reference on Corporate Culture)

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- ^v E. Abrahamson and C. J. Fombrun, 'Macrocultures: determinants and consequences', *Academy of Management Journal*, 19 (1994): 728–55; B. Dumaine, 'Creating a new company culture', *Fortune* (15 January 1990): 127–31.
- ^{vi} Hayes, J. (2007)*The Theory and Practice of Change Management 2nd Ed* Palgrave McMillan, London
- ^{vii} Schein, *Organizational Culture*, op. cit.; R. Kilmann, M. Saxton and R. Serpa, eds, *Gaining Control of the Corporate Culture* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1985).
- ^{viii} H Schwartz & S Davis 1981, 'Matching corporate culture and business strategy', *Organizational Dynamics*, Summer, pp. 30–48; S. Davis 1984, *Managing Corporate Culture*, Ballinger, Cambridge, Massachusetts.