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The Relationship Between a Sense of Urgency Implementation and Successful Change Strategies in Organizations

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A SENSE OF URGENCY IMPLEMENTATION

AND SUCCESSFUL CHANGE STRATEGIES IN ORGANIZATIONS

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By

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INTRODUCTION

Companies understand that they cannot lose touch with their customers and still stay competitive. They realize the need to strategize, communicate, and implement organizational change while continuing their daily business. Whether taking a firm that is on its knees and restoring it to health, making an average contender the industry leader, or pushing a leader farther out front, accomplishing successful change in an organization requires great cooperation, initiative, and willingness to make sacrifices from many people (Kotter, 1996, p. 35).

Change in organizations or a company is constant and it is hard work. Many wanted changes often fail, or if implemented are not as broad based as expected. To increase the probability that change will be successful, management is reaching out to academia for new approaches. This research paper explores the relationship between a sense of urgency and successful change strategies in organizations offered in John Kotter's <u>Leading Change</u> (1996). So why is this important? This knowledge prepares organizations that are planning to follow a change process to better understand how important creating a sense of urgency is to the success of that process.

A Sense of Urgency is the first stage of "Leading Change" written by John Kotter (1996). He suggests that the importance of leading a successful change throughout an organization is keeping complacency at a minimum and urgency at a maximum. In trying to change organizations the biggest mistake people make is to push ahead without establishing a high enough sense of urgency in managers and employees (Kotter, 1996, p. 4). Setting the

sense of urgency is the first step and must be maintained through the complete change initiative.

Companies or organizations lacking urgency in their change process often find barriers that block organizational change implementation. Some barriers include anxiety, fear, and passiveness. Leaders must communicate strategies throughout their organization with commitment and alignment that provide authentic communication with all employees for the reasons for the change.

Change effects each employee differently. For many individuals, it pushes them out of their comfort zone and into a point of anxiety. Managing change means managing conversations between the persons leading the change effort with those who are expected to implement the new strategies, managing organizational context in which the change can occur, and managing the emotional connections that are essential for any transformation (Duck, 1993, p. 3).

Persons who are enthusiastic will follow the new approach, if given permission. Others will sit and watch, with the attitude "I will believe it when I see it." These reactions illustrate why change in organizations often fails. Management often does not "talk the talk and walk the walk." Creating a sense of urgency through an organization can be a wake-up call to those skeptics to join the change initiative.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The focus of this study was to determine how the sense of urgency has caused the implementation of successful change initiatives in management practices in organizations.

How was "Establishing a Sense of Urgency" actually applied in the organizational change process?

RESEARCH GOALS

This problem was addressed by focusing on the following questions:

1. Was the sense of urgency promoted at the organization?

2. If promoted, did the sense of urgency lead to success?

3. How was the sense of urgency promoted, if used?

4. Did the organization reach success without the sense of urgency during their change?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Organizations have progressed through the change process since the history of management and leadership was recorded and studied. The industrial age forced organizations to develop and change methods of manufacturing products, managing resources, and the means of providing their products to their customer. Organizations in the United States during the sixties and early seventies were driven to change the way they treated their customer's demands by foreign organizations. Today, companies and organizations are in a constant state of change just to stay solvent. Their customers are demanding more for less and forcing organizations to provide new and improved products on a constant basis.

Change in organizations does not occur overnight. It can take between seven to ten years to make a cultural change in an established organization. In order for change to be a success, the alignment between the management's vision and behavior needs to evoke

commitment in employees. It is this dimension of a personal compact that is undermined most in a change initiative when conflicts arise and communication breaks down (Strebel, 1996, p. 4). Trust between management and the employee is important; once trust is broken, it is difficult to re-earn.

Organizations looking at fundamental shifts of change do not need to improve themselves; they need to reinvent themselves. Reinvention is creating something new, not simply the evolvement of changing what already exists. When a company sets out on the journey of reinvention, it must uncover and then alter the invisible assumptions and premises on which decisions and actions are based. The reinvention of a company is hard work that includes an assembly of stakeholders to do an organizational audit, create urgency, harness contention, and engineer breakdowns that reveal weak spots (Goss, Pascale, & Athos, 1993, p. 1).

Whether it is an organizational change, a change in a personal compact between the organization and the employee, or an organizational reinvention, a sense of urgency is required in order for success to occur.

LIMITATIONS

This study was limited to:

1. One hundred of the Fortune 500 companies found in the United States that utilized a change process within the last two years.

2. Utilizing a semantic differential managerial characteristic instrument for data collection.

3. A period of 45 days was allotted for delivery and collecting of data to selected companies.

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ASSUMPTIONS

The researcher made the following assumptions before data were collected and tabulated:

1. The data were representative of the organizations that followed a change process.

2. The organizational change was either successful or not successful.

3. There was a sense of urgency in the change process used or not used by the organization.

PROCEDURES

Fortune Magazine's compilation of the Fortune 500 companies of the United States provided the researcher a listing of organizations throughout the country that may have engaged in using a sense of urgency in an on-going change process. One hundred Chief Executive Officers' (CEO's) were chosen from this list at random, using every fifth name in ascending order from the top to bottom of the list. A semantic differential questionnaire was developed focusing on specific characteristics of change in the organization and the specific use of self-urgency. The characteristics were defined in the instrument. The research was administered by sending the survey instrument, a cover letter including a notice of agency, and a self addressed envelope to selected organization's CEOs. Responses were collected, numerical data were tabulated, and word comparisons were analyzed to develop a profile of the characteristics of a sense of urgency used in various change processes.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following list of terms was related to this research:

1. **Urgency** – Attributes created to begin a business transformation and establish sustained change performance in an organization.

2. **Complacency** – Organizations that in a time of crisis show the attributes of being lethargic, issues discussed are marginally important, and the energy level is low. There is no sense that the enemy is at our door.

3. **Success** – Organizations' ability to move in the direction toward which the change initiative was driving the organization.

OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS

Chapter I, the Introduction, stated that the problem was how the sense of urgency has caused the implementation of successful change initiatives in management practices in organizations. How has the first stage, "Establishing a Sense of Urgency", actually been applied in the organizational change process? Chapter II presents supporting literature for the study, including important variables from different studies, relationships to other studies, and the significance of the problem. Chapter III presents the methods and procedures used to collect supporting data. Chapter IV describes the findings, while Chapter V summarizes the research and provides recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The research problem was how the sense of urgency has caused the implementation of successful change initiatives in management practices in organizations. Several relevant studies concerning organizational change and the importance of creating a sense of urgency were reviewed. This review revealed information about characteristics of different change initiatives that organizations typically do not pursue such as creating a sense of urgency or not implementing change initiatives. With knowledge, organizations may enhance their ability to make change improvements more efficiently.

THE BEHAVIOR OF UPPER LEVEL MANAGEMENT

The need for change throughout organizations is widely recognized and acknowledged, yet creating and making the change become permanent throughout organizations is extremely difficult. Most of the studies reviewed for this research focused on two areas in field settings. In the first one, participants were observed during actual organizational settings to determine the type of leadership or management styles that were required for motivating the actions needed to make a successful organizational change. This information was used to determine if the participants produced the results in behavior alteration required throughout the organization for significant organizational change to occur. Only leadership can blast through sources of corporate inertia and motivate the actions needed to alter behavior in any significant way. Second, modern organizations are far too complex to be transformed by a single giant. This leadership effort must have support from

many people who assist the leadership agenda within their sphere of activity (Day, 1998, p. 2). Many commentators and researchers concluded that more leadership and less management are required to successfully lead a change process through an organization.

PSYCHOLOGY OF CHANGE PROGRAMS

Another study focused on change programs and why the desired outcome is the main focus and not the nature of people involved. Workers establish a psychological contract with the organization in which they perceive promises for their commitment to the organization. Like a contract, this is a two-way deal. This agreement is more important to the worker than the organization, and it provides a sense of stability. Proposed changes that threaten this contract without mutual agreement send out alarms to those involved.

Thorndike's Law of Effect, one of the most compelling laws of human nature, states that people repeat behaviors which have, in the past, produced pleasant outcomes. Conversely, people avoid behaviors that have, in the past, been unpleasant in their outcome (Gale Research, 1998, p. 1). Proposed organizational changes affect a person's law of effect by stating that something was done wrong, and that there is an unknown lurking in the future. Both areas are unpleasant to the individuals involved. Individuals work for themselves first, and then for the organization. When development of change processes includes both managers and individuals, a form of legitimacy and higher chance of success and less of resistance are in effect. This study concluded with the notion that a sustained organizational change can not occur without the commitment from management in allowing ownership of employees in the change process.

CHARACTERISTICS OF CHANGE PROGRAMS

John Kotter (1996), one of the foremost experts in defining characteristics of organizational change programs, explains his eight-step process that organizations should follow in reengineering in order to achieve their change goals. These include:

1. **Establishing a Sense of Urgency.** Organizations examine their exterior and interior surroundings to locate the complacency that hinders change processes. A sense of urgency instills a greater sense of conflict or anxiety throughout the organization that can lead to starting a change process.

2. **Creating the Guiding Coalition.** As complacency is lowered, creation of the guiding coalition with the proper membership and enough power to lead the change while acting as a team is the second and most important step. If the team is established without the proper power to enforce the changes developed, the organization will have an early postmortem.

3. **Developing a Vision and Strategy.** The vision is used to direct the effort of change. It should consist of obtainable realistic goals, communicate the direction with a simple understanding, allow for responses and initiatives by individuals, and, most importantly, be explained within the first five minutes of a discussion. The strategy provides the level of detail on how the vision is to be implemented.

4. **Communicating the Change Vision.** The use of constant communication with every available means of the new vision and its strategies provide individuals in the organization a greater chance of understanding and the ability to ask questions of the coalition team. This constantly communicating the change throughout the

organization allows the sharing of the desirable future and can motivate individual transformations and commitment.

5. **Empowering Broad-Based Action.** Empowerment, if used correctly, can be a vital tool to a change process. If individuals feel they are empowered to make changes many obstacles are removed, risk taking is encouraged, new ideas are tried, and systems that undermine the change are lowered. Empowered individuals can take ownership with the change process.

6. **Generating Short-Term Wins.** Organizations are under the gun by their stockholders to make a profit. Change processes are often costly and time consuming and will lose momentum if there are no short term wins to meet and celebrate.

7. **Declaring Victory Too Soon.** Organizations may feel that they can declare victory with the first performance improvement and, while that can be celebrated as a win for the change processes, it can be catastrophic. It usually can take between 5 and 10 years before a change process is deeply rooted in the organization.

8. **Not anchoring changes in the Corporations Culture.** Until the new process behaviors are clearly rooted into the social norms and the organizational culture, they are subject to return to the old ways. All members of the organization must believe that the changes in place are part of the new culture established by the process.

The Sloan Management Review, Fall 1999, revealed that organizational focuses are traceable to a lack of commitment towards the deep-seeded changes in organizations which

parallel the change processes explained in <u>Leading Change</u> (Kotter, 1996). Though the Sloan Review establishes six conditions instead of the eight mentioned by Kotter, they complement each other in that the sense of urgency is established first (although Sloan places a leadership spin on it). This researcher chose to study the sense of urgency because it is the first step needed by an organization to drive their change initiative. Each of the following conditions was essential for an organization sustaining long-term change processes to become a success according to the <u>Management Review</u>.

1. **Demonstrating leadership commitment.** A leader is responsible for establishing the sense of urgency, providing the time and resources, and championing the need for change.

2. **Understanding the need for change.** Key implementers need to recognize the need for change, the barriers they face, and the benefits for the organization if the change is successful.

3. **Shaping a vision.** Do employees understand and grasp the vision that is provided? Do they have ownership in the vision and its promised results?

4. **Mobilizing commitment at all levels.** All members of the change committee should be committed and have the credibility, resources, and experience to overcome resistors.

5. **Aligning structures, systems, and incentives.** Does the leadership have a viable plan in developing, recruiting, and deploying people in the new structure or system in relationship to the markets being approached? Are incentives in place for change agents who are successful in sustaining the change process in the organization?

6. **Reinforcing the Change.** Organizations creating change are responsible for creating a means of benchmarking, measuring, focusing on the successes of the program, and spreading the word to the masses. Early successes pave the way for sustaining the change.

The first six characteristics of the Sloan management process are essential for organizations' change processes. Organizations may have trouble following these phases because they take time and money. Without quick returns on investment, many successes often go astray.

LEADERSHIP ROLE CHANGE

Many leaders need to refine their skills and behaviors in facing the rigors of new markets, changing to a global economy, and shifting to new technologies. Formal leaders might not have all the knowledge and behavioral skills needed to complete a change. Members of the organization should expect them to take council when needed, be committed to the change espoused, communicate to the masses, accelerate their learning, and to listen to and treat members of the team as partners in the change.

In many cases, it is not just the organization that has to change, the beliefs of the leadership also need to change. Rather than requiring just one group in the organization to change, in reality, all members are players in the change game.

Followers are important to an organization's change process and are empowered to implement the change initiative by filling three important roles. These include being:

- Innovators – Being closest to the customer, innovators are able to share new ideas, improvements, and straight comments from the customer.

- Self-managers – This means identifying and examining changes occurring and trying to understand the new values, feelings, and beliefs that are required to implement the change.

- Risk takers – After reflection, risk takers have the ability to stand up and defend improvements or make enhancements for the betterment of the organization (McLagan, 2001, p. 3).

Being a constructive follower is not a passive role in which individuals do what others plan. It demands that followers keep a perspective on what is best for the organization, its stakeholders, and even for members (McLagan, 2001, p. 3). It is important to realize that all stakeholders in an organizational change process are represented in the leadership's role change.

CHARACTERISTICS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

Traditionally, when organizations decided that it was time for a change, leaders communicated the required change to managers, who then passed the change process down to their employees. With globalization, vast technology improvements, and the greater empowerment of the workforce, the change process in an organization is different in that members of the organization want to be included in the process.

The sense of urgency is the driving force for a sustained and lasting change in an organization. Managers who listen and communicate the vision with their employees realize that they share the same feelings, ideas and goals of the organization. It is imperative that the leadership creates a sense of urgency to establish the commitment needed by all change members. The empowerment of all stakeholders in the implementation process will provide the ownership and the working environment needed to successfully fulfill the overall vision

of the organization. Driving complacency out of the organization with the utilization of a sense of urgency in an iterative change process can bring about sustained and successful change implementation.

SUMMARY

Chapter II, Review of Literature, discussed the findings of other change process studies, surveys, and characteristics essential for leaders, managers, and organizations to implement sustained organizational change. Chapter III, Methods and Procedures, describes the subject selection, research design, and data analysis processes.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Chapter III describes the type of research used to collect and analyze data, how the subjects were selected, and the conditions of testing. This research study was descriptive in nature. A Likert scale questionnaire was used for collecting the required data for analysis of the study.

POPULATION

Due to the number of organizations that are successful throughout the United States, the list of the top 500 companies found in Fortune Magazine for the year 2002 was used. Communication and change are very important aspects of potential organizational success, especially among the top management levels of an organization. All CEO's of this unique group of managers who may have dealt with various aspects of a change initiative are included on the random selection list. These professional managers/leaders range from business accountants to information system technicians. They are seasoned professionals who, through trial and error, have learned to successfully complete ongoing organizational change initiatives.

The questionnaire was administered to 100 randomly picked organizations from the top 500 companies making up the Fortune 500 2002 list provided by Fortune Magazine. The random selection of the organizations was completed by selecting every fifth named organization in chronological order using their capital worth from the most to the least.

INSTRUMENT DESIGN

The characteristics of the sense of urgency in the questionnaire came from the research findings in the Review of Literature and were developed by the researcher. Upon review of many different studies and much information on organizational change processes, the researcher developed the instrument by responding to a semantic differential questionnaire consisting of 9 bipolar adjectives using a 5 point Likert scale with one polar adjective to capture the general response of the respondent using a Sense of Urgency in an organizational change process. A sample of the questionnaire is provided in Appendix A.

PILOT TEST

The instrument used was administered and tested by 10 professionals with a background in organizational change to measure the effects and flow of the adjectives. Results of this test clarified the intent of the instrument for the results of the research.

DATA COLLECTION

The questionnaire was administered to 100 randomly picked organizations from the top 500 companies making up the Fortune 500. The questionnaire was sent to the CEO of each organization with the offer that if they so desired, that the findings of the research would be shared with the participating organization. This method of administering the questionnaire was chosen to ensure a large return of the instrument. Included in the packet were:

1. A letter explaining the purpose of the study and instructions for responding to the instrument signed by the researcher (Appendix B).

2. The survey instrument.

3. A self-addressed, stamped envelope.

DATA ANALYSIS

Upon receipt and collection of the instrument, number values were given to each response. The following values were assigned to the bipolar adjectives: Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Neither = 3, Agree =4, Strongly Agree = 5. Respondents who returned the instrument without responding were coded with the value for this response = 0. The total scores, mean, and standard deviation were computed based on the responses. Word comparisons were used for the polar adjective.

SUMMARY

A questionnaire was administered to the CEOs of 100 randomly chosen companies of the Fortune 500 list. The selected organizations were chosen because they were representative of successful business or financial organizations in the United States that use some kind of change process to guide their operation.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The focus of this study was to determine how the sense of urgency, one of Kotter's (1996) eight stages of Leading Change, has shown the implementation of successful change strategies in management practices in organizations. How was "Establishing a Sense of Urgency" actually applied in the organizational change process? This chapter contains a detailed analysis of data collected to answer the problem and a summary of the research findings.

There were one hundred surveys sent to the respondents. There were a total of thirty surveys returned for a 30% response rate after the initial cover letter and a second follow-up reminder. However, of those that did respond to the survey, only 5 or (5%) actually answered the survey instrument. Upon further examination of the survey instrument, the researcher noticed that there might have been a misunderstanding in the directions given to the respondent filling out the instrument. Those respondents who returned an uncompleted survey instrument generally did so accompanied by a statement that they personally or organizationally have a policy to not complete surveys.

Table 1 gives the reader a summary of the responses collected by the researcher. The responses in the table are in rank order using the mean from the highest to the lowest. The total number of respondents is also shown as well as the standard deviation and the total number for each question that was given a response.

Table 1, Sense of Urgency, All Items

Ballot Item	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean	STD	n
A "Sense of Urgency" was used to create a successful change Initiative.	1	2	0	0	0	13	4.33	0.58	3
In creating your change initiative a "Sense of Urgency" was established.	2	2	1	0	0	21	4.2	0.84	5
The "Sense of Urgency" reduced the level of complacency regarding the need for change.	1	2	1	1	0	18	3.6	1.14	5
The "Sense of Urgency" was driven through the whole organization.	1	2	0	2	0	17	3.4	1.34	5
The basis for the "Sense of Urgency" included customer.	1	0	3	1	0	15	3	1.1	5
The "Sense of Urgency" was developed so all members involved understood the need for the change initiative.	0	1	3	1	0	14	2.8	0.71	5
Without using a "Sense of Urgency" the change initiative was still considered successful.	0	0	1	3	0	9	2.25	0.5	4
A "Sense of Urgency" was not used in initiating the organization change process.	0	0	1	3	0	9	2.25	0.5	4
The use of "Sense of Urgency" in the organization change initiative did not lead to success.	0	0	1	4	0	11	2.2	0.45	5

SENSE OF URGENCY

The following is an analysis of the questions that are found in Table 1, they are discussed in rank order using the results of the mean score from the highest to the lowest.

- **A "Sense of Urgency was used to create a successful change initiative.** Only three out of the five respondents answered this question. Two respondents strongly agreed and one agreed that a Sense of Urgency was used to create a successful change initiative in their organizations change process yielding a mean of 4.33, indicating that all respondents' organizations created some kind of sense of urgency during their successful change initiative.

- **In creating your change initiative a "Sense of Urgency was established.** All five

respondents answered this question. Two strongly agreed with the statement, two agreed, and one answered "neither". The mean score was 4.2, meaning those organizations that created a change initiative established a "Sense of Urgency" so those members in the organization were able to understand there was a need for some kind of change initiative.

- **The "Sense of Urgency" reduced the level of complacency regarding the need for change.** All five respondents answered this question with three out of five either agreeing or strongly agreeing; one respondent neither agreed nor disagreed; and one disagreed with the statement about complacency being lowered in the organization. The mean score was 3.6, indicating that most respondents felt that complacency towards the established change initiative in the organization was lowered.

- **The "Sense of Urgency" was driven through the whole organization.** This question was answered by all five respondents with one strongly agreeing and two agreeing that the "Sense of Urgency" was driven through the whole organization. Two respondents disagreed with this statement and felt that it was not driven through their organization. The mean score was 3.4, meaning that the sense of urgency was not driven through the lowest levels of all the organizations that had some kind of change initiative.

- **The basis for the "Sense of Urgency" included the customer.** All five respondents answered this question with neither side in agreement or disagreement in including their customer as the basis for the "Sense of Urgency" during the change process taking place in the organization. The mean score was 3.2. This indicated that organizations do not either include the customer or use the customer as a driving force in creating a sense of urgency in their change initiative.

- **The "Sense of Urgency" was developed so all members involved understood the**

need for the change initiative. All five respondents answered this question with the outcome neither in agreement or disagreement; the mean score was 3. This indicated that the sense of urgency was developed so that all members of the organization involved really understood the need for the change initiative.

- **Without using a "Sense of Urgency" the change initiative was still considered successful.** Four out of the five respondents answered this question. Three disagreed with this statement and one answered "neither" with the mean being 2.25. This indicated that the respondents felt that some kind of sense of urgency was needed and that a sense of urgency was important to the success of the organizations change initiative.

- **A "Sense of Urgency" was not used in initiating the organization change process.** Four out of the five respondents answered this question. Four out of the five respondents disagreed and one answered "neither" with the mean being 2.25. This indicated that a sense of urgency was developed in organizations needing some kind of change initiative.

- **The use of "Sense of Urgency" in the organization change initiative did not lead to success.** There were five responses to this question. Four of the five respondents disagreed with this statement, with one lone respondent neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the mean being 2.2. Most respondents concluded that a sense of urgency did lead to their organizations change initiative in the organization being a success.

SENSE OF URGENCY RESULTS

Though there was a very low response rate in answering the questions in the survey instrument, those that did respond suggested that a "Sense of Urgency" is used during the change initiative created and established by their organizations. It is interesting that the

standard deviation for the first two questions and the last four questions are close in agreement with each other.

The standard deviation for the middle three questions dealing with the customer being the basis for the change initiative, how far down the sense of urgency was driven through the organization, and if the level of complacency regarding the change initiative was reduced, has a broader deviation than the rest of the survey questions.

QUESTION TEN

Table 2, the "Sense of Urgency, Open Ended Response" reports the findings of the open-ended question found on the survey instrument. The two sub-scale contents were "hindered" or "aided". The researcher determined the outcome of the survey question by using word comparisons chosen from the text given by the respondents who chose to answer the instrument. A pre-determined answer was not established since this area of the instrument collected how the respondent felt on the results of the sense of urgency used in their organization. Two of the five respondents shared information with the researcher in that they felt that a "Sense of Urgency" either aided or strongly aided the success of the change initiative established by their organization. It is interesting to note that those respondents that responded to Question 10 of the survey strongly agreed that the sense of urgency they created was driven through their organization and that the level of complacency was lowered through their organization.

Table 2, Sense of Urgency, Open Ended Response

	Aided	Strongly Aided	Total
If the "Sense of Urgency" was used by your organization in creating a change initiative do you feel it either hindered or aided the results of the outcome?	1	1	2

SUMMARY

This chapter included the findings and a summary of the data collected for the

research to determine whether the "Sense of Urgency" caused the implementation of

successful change initiatives in management practices in organizations. The identification of

the respondents' feelings towards the sense of urgency in an organizational change process or

initiative was included in the chapter. The findings included a description how the Sense of

Urgency survey was scored in order to identify the findings. Chapter V includes the

summary, conclusions, and recommendations to the research.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter contains a summary of the research conducted. It also contains the conclusions for the research and the recommendations to further the study.

SUMMARY

The problem of this study was to determine how the sense of urgency, one of the eight stages of <u>Leading Change</u>, has caused the implementation of successful change strategies in management practices in organizations. How was "Establishing a Sense of Urgency" actually applied in the organizational change process?

To test this problem, information was gathered using a Sense of Urgency Survey. The significance of the study was to determine if organizations making a change in their processes created a sense of urgency to successfully complete their required change. The research study was limited to CEOs of Fortune 500 companies, who during their tenure, have completed change processes in their organizations.

The Sense of Urgency was the instrument utilized to determine the organizations use of a sense of urgency during a process change. Each participant was asked to respond to the instrument in confidentiality to find his or her points of view on the use of a sense of urgency. The data from the surveys were collected, analyzed, and the findings placed into a scaled matrix to examine their frequencies. The mean and median scores along with the standard deviation were used to show the relationships between the agreement and disagreement of the use of a sense of urgency in an organizational change.

CONCLUSIONS

The research conducted focused on four objectives. The first objective was to find if the sense of urgency was promoted at the organization. Findings showed that the sense of urgency was used and promoted in all the organizations that responded to the survey instrument. Though the sense of urgency may not have been driven through the whole organization during its change initiative, it did reduce the level of complacency to those change agents involved in the process.

If promoted, did the sense of urgency lead to success, based on the findings of the Sense of Urgency instrument. It was concluded that the establishment of a sense of urgency led to the success of the organizational change initiative. Three respondents agreed that the sense of urgency led to the success of their organizational change process and two reported that the sense of urgency was real and, if not properly dealt with, the organization would be in dire straits.

The objective of how the sense of urgency was promoted through the organization was not answered. The findings showed that the respondents did not fully answer the open-ended question that was designed to capture this information. There was no relationship in the different means an organization used in promoting the sense of urgency in the change initiative through this study.

The findings showed that the organizations responding to the survey instrument placed their success in initiating change to the use of the sense of urgency. Three questions pointed to the respondents taking into account that if the sense of urgency was not established during their change initiative that driving the change initiative through their organization would not have succeeded.

Though there were not enough responses by the respondents to make a conclusion of its importance or non-importance to the use of a "Sense of Urgency" during an organizational change initiative, the researcher does find that is does play a role in the success of an organizational change process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings show that there is a place of importance for the use of a "Sense of Urgency" in the success of an organization's change initiative. The researcher is making the following recommendations because there was a greater lack of response to the survey instrument than was anticipated:

1. Reword the survey instrument so that it will capture the third objective, "How was the sense of urgency promoted, if used?" Testing of the instrument should be completed to measure the ability of capturing the material needed to complete the research. The instrument should be reissued to the Human Resource Department (HRD) of the organizations instead of the CEOs. Many returned surveys that were not given a response by the respondent stated that the CEO did not participate in any types of surveys.

2. A second recommendation is to utilize a more diverse sample of organizations over a broader range other than the Fortune 500 companies. The researcher should be able to compare the second survey's response rate against the original survey's response rate for improvement so they have a greater ability to believe the data results.

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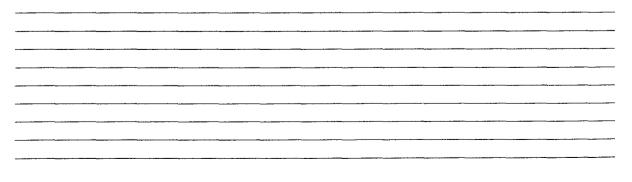
APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – Sense of Urgency Survey

Sense of Urgency Survey					
Directions: Please **check** one square for each question that comes closest to reflecting your opinion about the use of a "Sense of Urgency" in your last organizational change initiative.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Agree Strongly
1. In creating your change initiative a "Sense of Urgency" was established.					
2. The "Sense of Urgency" was driven through the whole organization.					
3. The "Sense of Urgency" reduced the level of complacency regarding the need for change.					
4. A "Sense of Urgency" was used to create a successful change initiative.					
5. The "Sense of Urgency" was developed so all members involved understood the need for the change initiative.					
6. The basis for the "Sense of Urgency" included customer.					
7. Without using a "Sense of Urgency" the change initiative was still considered successful.					
8. The use of "Sense of Urgency" in the organization change initiative did not lead to success.					
9. A "Sense of Urgency" was not used in initiating the organization change process.					

Brian Baxter – ODU – Master of Science – Summer 2002   For use for educational research purposes only.

If the "Sense of Urgency" was used by your organization in creating a change initiative do you feel it either hindered or aided the results of the outcome? Please explain your response.

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APPENDIX B – Respondent Letter

Brian Baxter

1720 Maryus Ct.
Virginia Beach, VA. 23454
(757) 721-5480 (H)

Dear Mr./ Mrs. Respondent:

I am writing to solicit your assistance with my research. I am a graduate student in the Occupational and Technical Studies Department at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia. I am a trainer in an organization that is going through a change process. I am pursuing this project after reading about the "Sense of Urgency" concept in different studies. I am interested in determining how great the relationship between success and a sense of urgency really is in establishing change in an organization. The title of the research is "The Relationship Between a Sense of Urgency Implementation and Successful Change Strategies in Organizations". The Sense of Urgency meaning "Attributes created to begin a business transformation and establish sustained change performance in an organization".

You have been randomly chosen from the list of Fortune 500 companies because of your organization proven success. This research will be used for educational purposes and your individual responses will not be disclosed. I will be the only individual analyzing the results to compile a statistical relationship. After the results have been compiled, the survey will be destroyed to further protect the anonymity of the individuals.

Please complete the survey in anonymity and return it, using the envelope provided, by June 14, 2002.

I would be pleased to share the results of the research with the participants who request a copy of the study. I may be reached at the above telephone number after 5 p.m. eastern time or by e-mail at Baxterfun@msn.com if you have any questions. I would like to thank you for participating in my graduate research.

Very sincerely yours,

Brian K. Baxter
Educational Researcher
OTED 636
Old Dominion University Summer 2002

APPENDIX C – Follow-up Letter

Brian Baxter

1720 Maryus Ct.
Virginia Beach, VA. 23454
(757) 721-5480 (H)

Dear Mr./ Mrs. Respondent:

I am writing this letter as a follow-up to the original correspondence sent a few weeks prior. If you recall my original correspondence informed you of a project I was conducting for research of an organization that is going through a change process. The title of the research was "The Relationship Between a Sense of Urgency Implementation and Successful Change Strategies in Organizations".

I know that you are very busy but if you could just take a few minutes to complete the survey instrument and send it back in the self addressed envelope that had been sent it would help my research tremendously.

I would like to thank you for participating in my graduate research.

Very sincerely yours,

Brian K. Baxter

Educational Researcher

OTED 636

Old Dominion University Summer 2002