Lewin’s 3-Stage Model of Change

Kurt Lewin

Kurt Lewin (1890–1947) was a German-born psychologist who, in the 1930 became one of the pioneers in the new field of social psychology. His early work in group dynamics and organization development largely defined these emerging disciplines. He wrote more than 80 articles and books (Russell & Russell, 2006).

Lewin was one of many gifted scientists and teachers who fled Hitler’s Germany for a new life in the United States, Lewin made significant contributions to so many different areas of psychology that he has been called “the complete social scientist”. He is well-known for theories such as the Field Theory, the Group Dynamics, the Action Research and the three-step model to change management. (Krapp, 2005; Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014).

All his contributions are based on the planning perspective. In spite of the fact that the Field Theory, the Group Dynamics, the Action Research and the three-step model for change management are often treated as separate themes, Kurt Lewin perceived them as an entity where one element supported and strengthened the other elements. All elements were important in order to understand and accomplish planned changes, whether they were at an individual, group, organizational or society level. In spite of the fact that Lewin’s theories about change are more than fifty years old, still much modern change management theory and practice is based on Lewin’s three-step model for change. Thus, Lewin’s contributions are still valid for today’s work with change management. While much of Lewin’s theoretical work, especially the part concerned with refreezing the organizational culture in the wake of change, has been included in later and modern thinking and experience, the core belief to break with the status quo (the basic belief) and to encourage people to see and join the need for change is still valid (Arlbjørn & Haug, 2010).

In the mid- to late-20th Century, theorists began to study the more complex dynamics of modern organizations and the interactions of people within them. Scholars including Kurt Lewin, Chris Argyris, Robert Chin, Lee Bolman and Terrance Deal, and Michael Fullan provided insights to better help organizational leaders – including principals – understand the multifaceted nature of change, its impact on people at work, and how leaders could use these insights to improve their groups’ productivity (Kaplan & Owings, 2015).

Lewin proposed that all social systems exist in a state of what he called “quasi-stationary equilibrium”, the parts being held together by a cohesive energy which also acts as a barrier to outside influences (Havelock et al., 1995).

3-Stage Model of Change

Kurt Lewin, the father of change processes, identified three phases in initiating and establishing any change – unfreezing, changing or moving, and refreezing the new change to make it permanent. The status quo can be considered to be a state of equilibrium. To move from this equilibrium – to overcome the pressures of both individual resistance and group conformity- unfreezing is necessary. It can be achieved in one of three ways shown in the Figure 1. Driving forces, which direct behaviour away from the status quo, can be increased. Restraining forces, which hinder movement from the existing equilibrium, can be decreased. A third alternative is to combine the first two approaches (Pathak, 2011).

According to Lewin, organizational stability is maintained when there is a balance of two sets of forces acting upon the organization. The driving forces are those forces pushing on the organization to move in a new direction. The restraining forces are those forces hindering this movement or change. Leading change effectively, suggests Lewin, involves managing these competing forces and actively facilitating the driving forces to effect the desired change while seeking to reduce or eliminate the restraining forces. In the first phase of his three-phase model, Lewin postulates that to introduce a change, change leaders need to unfreeze the status quo. By disrupting the organization’s equilibrium (where there is a balance of driving and restraining forces), change leaders create a possibility for movement toward the change vision. After introducing the change – Lewin’s second phase for leading change – Lewin calls this refreezing the third phase of the change process. His famous three-phase change model is at the core of almost all models for leading change and serves as a foundation for the more fully developed four-phase model (Russell & Russell, 2006).

Figure 1: Lewin's 3-Stage Model of Change – forces

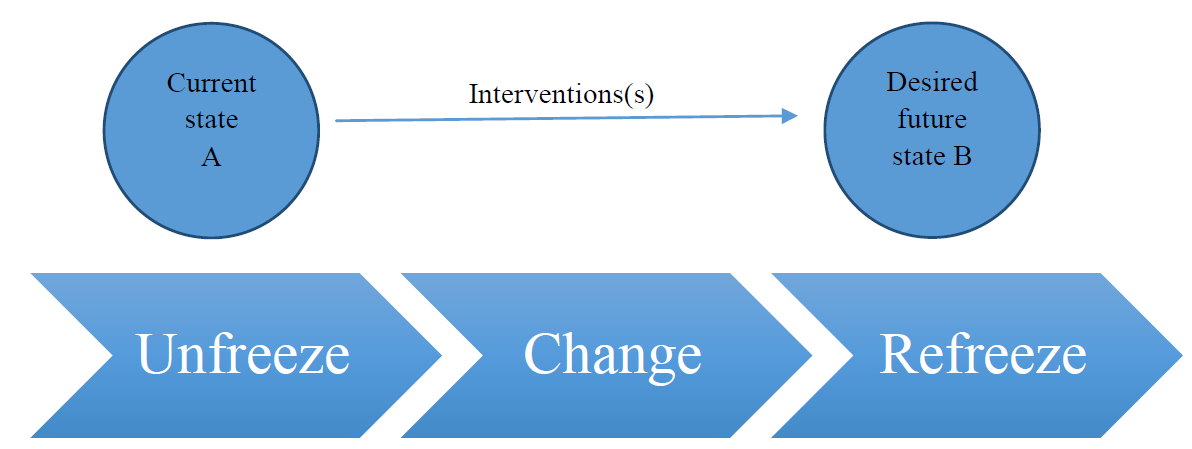




Source: (Pathak, 2011)

3-Stage Model of Change describes the change process as: unfreeze, moving, and refreeze as was mentioned above. *Unfreeze* refers to creating a motivation and readiness to change in an organization. Lewin describes that this step is initiated when an “equilibrium” of an organization is destabilized. *Moving* is the process of evaluating the change and determining the appropriate propagation mechanism. *Refreezing* is the final step Lewin’s three step model, which refers to integrating the change into the organization and resuming its orchestration. It consists of the actions an organization takes to regain its equilibrium (Liu et al., 2011).

Figure 2: Lewin's 3-Stage Model of Change – steps with description



**1. Determine what needs to change**

**2. Ensure there is strong support from upper management**

**3. Create the need for change**

**4. Manage and understand the doubts and concerns**

**1. Anchor the changes into the culture**

**2. Develop ways to sustain the change**

**3. Provide support and training**

**4. Celebrate success!**

**1. Communicate often**

**2. Dispel rumors**

**3. Empower action**

**4. Involve people in the process**

Source: Kaplan & Owings (2015)

Phase 1: Unfreezing - Sometimes the first task of a change agent

Unfreezing is actually the process of preparing the system for change through discontinuation of the old practices, attitudes, tendencies, or behaviours. This is the initial phase where those involved in the change experience a need for something different and a sense of restlessness with the status quo. In essence, everyone feels that the system is hurting itself badly and desperately requires a change if it is to survive (Pathak, 2011).

Phase 2: Moving/changing - Only possible if there is openness to changing

The second step in Lewin’s change model was what he called “moving”. This is the introduction of the change or innovation and its initial acceptance or absorption into the system. The more permeable the barriers and the looser the interconnections within the system, the more rapidly and easily new elements can enter. This is what we could call system “openness”. Advanced and sophisticated systems are able to retain a great deal of internal stability while still welcoming many types of innovations. They can do this by being temporarily open at certain times or by having specialized subsystems that take in, analyse, and transform new inputs before they are introduced to the system as a whole (Havelock et al., 1995).

“Moving” might involve three rather different types of change inputs (Havelock et al., 1995):

1. change involving internal linkages and barriers;

2. changes that come from outside in a more-or-less random fashion about either intent or planning;

3. planned changes, brought about by the deliberate action of persons from inside or outside the system (or both).

Phase 3: Refreezing - Making sure that what comes stays if it is good

The final step in Lewin’s simple model is “refreezing,” i.e., the return to stability while the new elements are incorporated. Of course, systems that are temporarily open to new ideas can close up again without incorporating any new elements whatsoever. New elements can be tolerated for a time but then rejected, often at a point in time when members are forced by circumstance to decide what is “really important” (e.g., when budget trimming is required). Thus, in many ways the greatest challenge for the change agent is to gain a level of acceptance for the innovation that is strong enough to survive this closing-up process (Havelock et al., 1995).

Lewin’s critics

Lewin’s three stem unfreezing-moving-refreezing model actually covers all of out stages, but it is introduced here because it especially helps us to understand the first stage. The level of concern for a problem or the sense of a need to change the status quo must reach the point at which the system becomes unfrozen. It is also useful to think of change issues in terms of the system concepts that Lewin introduced. Our world is made up of systems within systems; sets of elements which go together from the microspace of atoms to the macrospace of galaxies. Living systems appear to be the most complex and interesting because of their ability to reproduce and to process material from their environment to maintain a more-or-less stable internal state. At the physiological level we refer to this stage as “homeostasis” and the processing transformation as “metabolism”. Social organization has developed into a variety of forms with equivalent quasi-stationary internal states and with processes equivalent to metabolism. Both the states and the processes of social systems have to be recognized and evaluated in order to bring about change. They are the barriers to change, the targets of change, and the very stuff of change all at one (Havelock et al., 1995).

Lewin undoubtedly had an enormous impact on the field of change. In reappraising Lewin’s planned approach to change, this chapter seeks to address three issues: the nature of his contribution, the validity of the criticism levelled against him, and the relevance of his work for contemporary social and organizational change. Looking at Lewin’s contribution to change theory and practice, there are three key points to note. (1) *The first* is that Lewin’s work stemmed from his concern to find an effective approach to resolving social conflict through changing group behaviour (whether these conflicts be at the group, organizational, or societal level). (2) *The second* point is to recognize that Lewin promoted an ethical and humanist approach to change, which saw learning and involvement as being the key processes for achieving behavioural change. This was for two reasons (Burke et al., 2009):

 he saw this approach as helping to develop and strengthen democratic values in society as a whole and thus acting as a buffer against the racism and totalitarianism that so dominated events in his lifetime;

 on the basis of his background in Gestalt psychology and his own research, he saw this approach as being the most effective in bringing about sustained behavioural change.

The last point concerns the nature of Lewin’s work. Lewin’s planned approach to change is based on four mutually reinforcing concepts mentioned above, namely Field Theory, Group Dynamics, Action Research, and the Three-Step Model, which are used in combination to bring about effective change. His critics, though, tend to treat these as separate and independent elements of Lewin’s work and, in the main, concentrate on his Three-Step Model of Change. When seen in isolation, the Three-Step Model can be portrayed as simplistic. When seen in alongside the other elements of Lewin’s planned approach, it becomes a much more robust approach to change (Burke et al., 2009).

The main criticisms levelled at Lewin are that:

1) His view of stability and change in organizations was at best no longer applicable and at worst “wildly inappropriate”.

There is substantial evidence that Lewin recognized that “Change and constancy are relative concepts; group life is never without change, merely differences in the amount and type of change exist. “There is also a substantial body of evidence in the social, and even physical sciences, to support Lewin’s three-step perspective on change (Hendry, 1996).

2) His approach to change is only suitable for isolated and incremental change situations.

As Dickens and Watkins observed, Lewin’s approach is “intended to foster change on the group, organizational and even societal levels.” In the main, he saw changes a slow process of working with and through groups to achieve behavioural and cultural change. However, writers as diverse as Quinn (1980, 1982) and Kanter et al. (1992) have recognized that an incremental approach can achieve organizational transformation. Lewin also recognized that, under certain crisis conditions, organizational transformations can be achieved rapidly (Kippenberger, 1998). Nevertheless, in the main, even amongst Lewin’s critics, the general view is that only structural and technical change can be achieved relatively speedily (Kanter et al., 1992, Pettigrew et al., 1989; Wilson, 1992).

3) He ignored power and politics.

Given Lewin’s concern with issues such as racial and religious conflict, the accusation that he ignored the role of power and politics is difficult to sustain. One of the main strengths of Field Theory and Group Dynamics is that they identify the forces within and between groups and show how individuals behave in response to these. In addition, the iterative, investigative, and learning approaches that lie at the heart of Action Research and the Three-Step Model are also designed to reveal and address such issues (Bargal and Bar, 1992).

4) He adopted a top-down, management-driven approach to change.

The issues Lewin sought to tackle were many and varied. Lewin’s sympathies were clearly with the underdog, the disadvantaged, and the discriminated against (Cooke, 1999; Marrow, 1969). His assistance was sought by a wide range of parties including national and local

government, religious and racial groups, and employers and unions; his response emphasized learning and participation by all concerned (Lewin, 1948). In the face of this, the charge that he saw changes as only being top-down or management- driven is difficult to sustain.

**Rezistence to change**

Resistance to change in employees is a psychological state that affects the success of change initiatives in organizations (Choi & Ruona, 2011). As the majority of changes meet some resistance (Oreg, 2006), it is essential that organizations understand the phenomenon (Giangreco & Peccei, 2005); clearly, it also concerns researchers. In the organizational development (OD) and management fields, and building on the work of Coch and French (1948) and Lewin (1951), researchers have studied resistance as part of the change process.

It is known that there is resistance to change in any organization and that managers must overcome it (Graves et al., 2013). Resistance to change is known to mold the behavior of people in organizations (Dent and Goldberg, 1999). To ensure successful and sustainable change, top management must predict and neutralize any resistance that may occur. Several studies have considered reluctance to give up old habits as common characteristic of resistance to change (Tichy, 1983; Watson, 1971).

The need for constructive organizational change is important in municipalities regarding atrategic planning, organizational structure, pattern, how to choose the mayor and other factors such as models of urban management, urban charters and national and regional laws, the effect of determining the status of local government and urban management institutions of power (Nazariyan and Rahimi, 2013: 127). The successful implementation of organizational changes in the municipalities as well as any other organization, to accept the changes desired by the members of the organization depends (Oreg & Sverdlik, 2011: 685).

With regard to the bureaucratic structure in the municipalities, the possibility of staff resistance to organizational change is high. Therefore, municipal leaders must use the appropriate management practices and strategic plans, favorable environment to reduce employee resistance to provide modified (Fawzy, 2015: 2045). As it commonly said, the only constant in today's world is "the change". Yu and Lee (2015) in an article entitled "Opening the Black Box: Describe the Relationship Between Perceived Organizational Support and Resistance to Change", concluded that readiness for change has a direct and negative impact on employee resistance to change. It was also found that the relationship between perceived organizational support and readiness for change and resistance to change, is due, as well as the readiness for change as well as to the relationship between psychological capital and resistance to change, is the intermediate variable.

Changes in the organization of staff usually resistant to follow. Employee resistance to change can be considered a natural answer, because change is a move from the known to the unknown (Hadavinejad et al., 2009: 120). Resistance to change is to support the current situation against anything that wants to change the current situation (Radzi & Othman, 2016: 72). Due to the fact that some staff resistance to change is inevitable, municipal leaders must first identify the factors affecting employee resistance to change and strive to eliminate or reduce it to positive changes and has been successfully implemented in organizations (Furst & Cable, 2008: 123). According to social exchange theory, when someone get a favor, this person feels an obligation to compensate it. In a similar way, organizational support suggests that when organizations focus on employee welfare, staff commitment and performance increase as a compensation (Taleghani et al., 2009: 3). When the organization respects employees and their work, workers feel supported by their organization (Neves & Eisenberger, 2014: 190). Perceived organizational support can be directly and indirectly (through influence of positive psychological capital) on employee readiness for change is effective. Positive psychological capital plays an important role in organizational change processes. Also, according to the theory of conservation, personnel resources that can be used to overcome challenges and 644 threats, are collected. They may be personal resources (such, positive psychological capital) or location sources (such as perceived organizational support) to collect (Yu & Lee, 2015: 179).

The literatures on organizational change (OC) and organizational development coincide in suggesting that resistance is determined by a large number of antecedents (e.g., Lewin, 1951; Ning & Jing, 2012) having to do with the individual, the organization, and the change context (Holt, Armenakis, Field, & Harris, 2007). With respect to the latter, the literature finds that how a change is carried out—the change process—and how favorable its outcomes are for participants—the change content—influence employees’ reactions to the change events (e.g., Van Dam et al., 2008). Although the change process has been studied through different variables in the areas of HRD (Foster, 2010) and OC (Giangreco & Peccei, 2005), both the strategic and fairness aspects of the process have been prevalent. These approaches suggest the use of practices to involve employees in the change process, such as informing about changes (Chin & Benne, 1985) and offering employees the opportunity to make suggestions—that is, communication and participation. Regarding the change content, employees resist the consequences of change more than the change itself (Oreg, 2006), but research often ignores these consequences (e.g., Lau & Woodman, 1995), so the estimated models are unlikely to offer a real understanding of resistance.

Employees’ reactions to change will also be driven by their traits, qualities, and self‐concepts, which provide them confidence to face change events (Lau & Woodman, 1995). Although many of the individual's characteristics have been studied by researchers (e.g., Wanberg & Banas, 2000), OBSE can offer new insights as it can describe the individual's behavior itself rather than the possible causes of such behavior (Pierce, Gardner, Dunham, & Cummings,1993). Different self‐regulatory mechanisms justify these OBSE effects, such as cognitive consistency theory (Korman, 1970), self‐enhancement motivation (Dipboye, 1977), self‐protection (Korman, 2001), and behavioral plasticity (Brockner, 1988). According to these mechanisms, people with high OBSE engage in behaviors that reinforce their positive image, while people with low OBSE protect themselves by refusing task‐related effort (Pierce & Gardner, 2004) required by the change. Furthermore, not all workers will react to management practices to get them involved in the change process in the same way. Employees’ reactions depend on variables relating to the individual's characteristics (Oreg, 2006), and plasticity theory (Brockner, 1988) also offers arguments to suggest that OBSE could moderate the relation between the employee's involvement in the change process and resistance in its three facets. According to this theory, differences exist in the degree to which individuals’ behavior is conditioned by external cues or their skills to perform tasks (Pierce et al., 1993). But the literature review carried out here failed to find any research analyzing OBSE or OBSE's moderating effect in studies of the antecedents of resistance to change. Finding support for this moderating effect would suggest that if change programs become challenging—and hence likely generating high levels of resistance—HRD practitioners’ actions aimed at raising OBSE will be important. However, although the change process, change outcomes, and OBSE are all malleable (Pierce & Gardner, 2004) and HRD practitioners can act on them to reduce resistance, OBSE becomes a relatively stable individual self‐perception as tenure increases in the firm (Pierce, Gardner, Cummings, & Dunham, 1989). Thus, it is important to understand its effect on resistance to change, because if this influence exists, managers need to consciously strive early on to increase the OBSE level among their employees. From a cognitive point of view, the employee will consider all the available information with regards the change in order to interpret it and appraise its significance (Lazarus, 1991) and possible personal consequences (Holt et al., 2007). Oreg (2006) expects perceived benefits to have the strongest effect on employees’ cognitive evaluation of changes as these consequences constitute the main reason why employees resist change. Thus, if individuals perceive improvement possibilities, they will develop favorable thoughts about the change, reducing resistant thought. The perception of foreseen benefits is also associated with the importance individuals attribute to each benefit, with this valence generating differences in employees’ emotional responses (Kiefer, 2002). Emotional response has motivational functions (Lazarus, 1991) since it makes employees feel enthusiastic or reluctant about the change (Lines, 2005), though the same individual can harbor both feelings (Piderit, 2000).

Perceived benefits that highlight interdependence in relationships will give rise to positive feelings because relationships in the workplace are the primary focus of employees’ feelings (Madsen, Miller, & John, 2005). If an employee perceives that he or she will achieve better social integration and supportive relationships, the feelings of stress that change causes will reduce (Cunningham et al., 2002). Furthermore, as the seduction process is a matter of emotions, employees can be seduced by the promise of a future interaction and support from colleagues, overlooking possible costs of change, such as a heavier workload (Doorewaard & Benschop, 2003). This reasoning is consistent with cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957) because people mainly pay attention to information that is consistent with the desired conclusion. Thus, the perception of these benefits will generate feelings of optimism that consequently substitute for the resistant feeling. However, Oreg (2006) finds that employees’ reaction to change outcomes will only be internal (i.e., cognitive and affective), not behavioral, while Doorewaard and Benschop (2003) warn that seduction from perceived benefits may not be enough to generate instrumental reasons to participate in implementing the change due to the existence of costs during the implementation.

From a behavioral perspective, and according to Hornung and Rousseau (2007), the eventual behavior of employees may be considered from an instrumental perspective because the employees will make the decision to support the change with their actions as a means of obtaining the perceived benefits (i.e., rational actor argument). Thus, although seduction and post's rewards have failed to predict employees’ actions to implement the change (e.g., Cunningham et al., 2002; Oreg, 2006), we can expect that benefits such as job security and economic rewards will have this effect. For example, although the material gain of money does not reduce resistant feeling related to uncertainty and stress about the change, the importance attributed to such benefits can lead individuals to make sacrifices implementing the change to access them. Similarly, as individuals usually value stability in their career in the firm—particularly when they perceive a lack of alternative employment options—if job security is offered as part of the change, employees may respond by supporting the change to access this benefit. This is so even if they fear they will not know how to carry out new tasks.

Since Coch and French (1948) discussed the importance of employee participation for preventing resistance to change, researchers have focused on identifying key variables to achieve successful change processes (Ning & Jing, 2012). Specifically, both the strategic and fairness approaches to the change process highlight the use of communication and participation practices to involve employees in the intervention (Choi & Ruona, 2011).

**Communication**

This practice is used when applying empirical–rational change strategies. According to the assumption underlying this strategy, employees will adopt a change if it is rationally justified and if it is possible to show them through the messages what they will gain by the change (Chin & Benne, 1985). Specifically, the elements of a successful message are, according to Armenakis, Harris, and Field (1999), the specific changes being planned, management's support for the change, the results expected, and how the changes will affect the employees’ interests. Thus, open and early communication will help employees to understand the essence of the change and therefore favor cognitive acceptance. Also, communication makes employees become familiar with the change and alleviates their feelings of uncertainty (Schalk, Campbell, & Freese, 1998), thus reducing resistant feelings. However, insufficient information will cause erroneous early perceptions (Pardo del Val & Martínez Fuentes, 2003) that make individuals reject managers’ further communication efforts and ultimately hinder acceptance of the change.

Although the literature highlights the positive effect of communication, Oreg (2006) finds that more information about the change is associated with a worse evaluation of it by employees and so higher resistant thought. According to this author, the relation between communication and resistance might depend on the content, as messages sometimes inform about the negative consequences of the change. From our perspective, Oreg's (2006) results can be explained in the context of a badly designed communication plan. An effective communication should include messages about the support mechanisms that will be provided to minimize the negative impact of change (Armenakis et al., 1999). Awareness about these mechanisms will increase employees’ cognitive understanding of the process and alleviate negative feelings about it.

Finally, although the communication process also helps employees to perceive the leader's vision as being relevant and urgent (Russ, 2008), so encouraging them to perform the desired shifts, its impact on resistant behaviors will be weaker than on resistant thought and feeling. Specifically, in the implementation stage of the change, when the employees know about the change effects, it may be the employees’ interest in the changes, rather than the messages coming from the managers that guides them in their decision to support the change (Oreg, 2006). For example, when changes have negative consequences for the employees, they may finally resist the change even if the management has implemented a good program of communication. This is consistent with the rational actor argument (Hornung & Rousseau, 2007).

Participation

The use of participation has been frequent in the context of normative–reeducative change strategies. Although these strategies—like rational–empirical ones—assume that employees are rationally self‐interested, they also consider that people are committed to socially shared meanings (Chin & Benne, 1985). Thus, employees will accept a change if it is rationally justified through information and if noncognitive determinants of behavior, such as values and feelings, are altered (Choi & Ruona, 2011). Thus, change will occur only when individuals participate in their own reeducation (Chin & Benne, 1985). Participation includes asking for employees’ opinions in order to create a dialogue and build a consensus about the content of the change (Russ, 2008). Participation will positively affect the employees’ cognitions, as it will increase accuracy about the rationale behind the change (Russ, 2008). Participation also evokes emotions, such as enthusiasm about being involved and pride at being asked to participate (Doorewaard & Benschop, 2003). The feeling of uncertainty also declines, while a sense of control increases (Russ, 2008). Furthermore, participation can help to build a positive and collective emotional response to change while meeting employees with different concerns, David Peroutka EKINFn

and so emotions, about the change. For example, employees can negotiate programs to alleviate the potential personal costs of change, thereby reducing their feelings of fear. Finally, participation increases employee commitment to the actions as employees’ interests are taken into account (Russ, 2008). According to the rational actor argument and instrumental perspective (Hornung & Rousseau, 2007), participation reduces resistant behavior because the positive return on those vested interests can be gained only by applying the changes. This motivation is stronger than remaining compliant with managers’ proposals (Chin & Benne, 1985).

Finally, compared to participation, communication involves only receiving information from managers, and this does not encourage employees to attend work groups to give consent to the change intervention and so risk revealing their level of competence. Employees assume a more passive role than when taking part in the participation process. Figure 1 shows the proposed research model.

*Picture 1:*

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*Picture 1: Differentiating the Three Components of Resistance to Change: Proposed Model*

**Kotter’s Eight-Step Change Model**

Kotter's model is based on a study of change in over one hundred organizations of different sizes and industry categories. Kotter's model is intended to help change leaders avoid common errors. It might be regarded as a vision of what the change process should be and how it should be carried out (Rothwell, Stavros, R. L. Sullivan, A. Sullivan, 2009).

A popular model for planning, implementing, and sustaining change is the Eight-Step Change Model by John Kotter (1996). The Kotter model breaks down the organizational change process into eight steps:

Step 1 - Establish a sense of urgency.

Step 2 - Create a guiding coalition.

Step 3 - Develop a vision and strategy for the specific change.

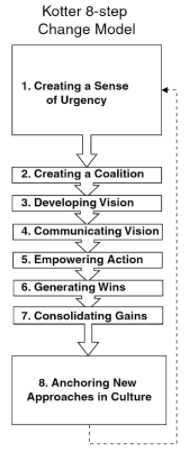
Step 4 - Communicate the vision and strategy for the specific change.

Step 5 - Empower the employees for action.

Step 6 - Generate short-term wins.

Step 7 - Consolidate gains and produce more change.

Step 8 - Anchor the new changes in the culture ([Sabri](https://www.google.cz/search?hl=cs&tbo=p&tbm=bks&q=inauthor:%22Ehap+H.+Sabri%22), [Gupta](https://www.google.cz/search?hl=cs&tbo=p&tbm=bks&q=inauthor:%22Arun+P.+Gupta%22), [Beitler](https://www.google.cz/search?hl=cs&tbo=p&tbm=bks&q=inauthor:%22Michael+A.+Beitler%22), 2006).



Source: G. Roth, A. DiBella, 2016

Kotter's eight-step change model is about showing people a truth that influences their feelings. We've seen how a sense of urgency moves people to action and helps us pull together a guiding team that can go on to prepare a clear and simple vision of the future. Communicating the vision and strategy comes next. The John Kotter Eight-Step Change model is linear model that focuses on the importance of gaining buy-in. It is relatively simple to understand and works well in organizations that are organized in a relatively narrow organizational structure. The selling point is its simplicity, a memorable eight steps, and a basis in Kotter's thirty-plus years of research into organizational change ([Voehl](https://www.google.cz/search?hl=cs&tbo=p&tbm=bks&q=inauthor:%22Frank+Voehl%22), [Harrington](https://www.google.cz/search?hl=cs&tbo=p&tbm=bks&q=inauthor:%22H.+James+Harrington%22), 2016).

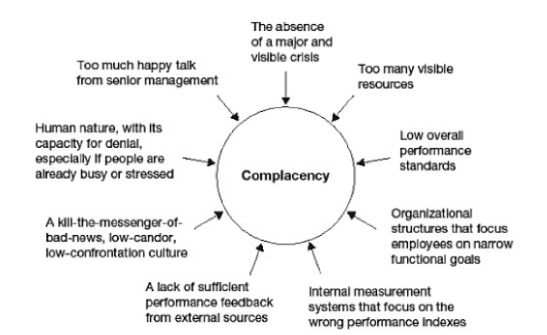
**Step 1 - Establish a sense of urgency**

To bring about change, there must be a great deal of cooperation, commitment of time and energy, and willingness to make sacrifices. To obtain this commitment, leaders must convince organization members that there is an urgency to change. Unfortunately, leaders often overlook this essential first step in the change process. The do not recognize the need to create a sense of dissatisfaction with the status quo, nor do they fully understand that this first step is necessary to break down organizational apathy. As I have discussed, change is often disruptive to organizations, unsettling for leaders, and painful for members, so an enormous amount of impetus is needed to move the change effort forward. The urgency to change becomes the energy that propels the organization ahead, and without the energy, the change effort sputters and ultimately dies for a lack of interest.

More often than not, leaders of change skip this step in the process and move on to the latter steps of planning and implementing. This is especially true when there are political pressures to perform or to implement a new program or mandate. Furthermore, as previously discussed, as a result of past experiences with organizational change, many organization members in human service agencies are skeptical of change processes, having witnessed a great deal of discussion about change without a great deal of action toward change. Therefore, any processes that are not perceived as directly related to accomplishment are suspect.

Although it is understandable that leaders want to move forward by instituting new changes, experience has shown that in the long run this is time-consuming and, ultimately, ill-advised. Kotter (1996), citing and example of an organization that did not take seriously this first step, notes that when the urgency to change is not created, the change efort rarely works well. "It doesn't build and develop in a natural way. It comes across as contrived, forced, or mechanistic. It doesn't create the momentum needed to overcome enormously powerful sources of inertia".

Without urgency, there is often complacency in organizations, and public human service agencies, given their bureaucratic nature, are not immune to this tendency. As discussed earlier, when organizations are complacent, cultural inertia sets in, and deep change, as opposed to superficial changes in structure and processes, becomes difficult. The following insights, adapted from Kotter's (1996) work, help us understand why there is so much complacency in organizations: [(Proehl](https://www.google.cz/search?hl=cs&tbo=p&tbm=bks&q=inauthor:%22Rebecca+Ann+Proehl%22), 2001).

**Sources of complacency**

Source: Kotter, 2012

**Step 2 - Create a guiding coalition**

Once you have identified your change champions who see the need for and support your vision, you need to work as a team to build momentum. It's important to utilise the ideas and value-added perspectives from your group. Their views will help shape and enhance your vision, thus creating a shared vision that has an emotional commitment from your followers; they become vested in your vision and will want to help you see it through to reality (Briggs, Fisher, Cooper, 2015).

Change can be initiated at the individual level by a worker, manager, or director of a human service agency, but regardless of where the change is initiated, individuals by themselves do not bring about change. The support of many persons is needed to successfully lead change in human service organizations. To develop this type of support, a team or perhaps many teams are needed to champion the cause. Even with smaller, incremental change, a team offers greater assurance that the change will be planned well and once planned, will be implemented (Proehl, 2001).

**Step 3 - Develop a vision and strategy for the specific change**

Facilitating the movement beyond traditional analytical and financial plans and budgets. Creating the right compelling vision to direct the effort. Helping the guiding team develop bold strategies for making bold visions a reality (Kotter, Cohen, 2015).

Every organization should already have a clear vision and a well-crafted strategic plan. Additionally, when leading a specific change effort, developing a vision and strategy for that specific change is important. (Note that this is Step 3, instead of Step 1 in Kotter's approach, which is significant).

No leader, regardless of talent, should single-handedly develop the vision and strategy for a specific change effort. Even if the leader is capable of developing a grand vision and a well-crafted strategic plan, the issue of buy-in is more important.

Therefore a change leader should actively elicit participation from all coalition members. Their participation provides valuable input into the decision-making process. Additionally participation provides coalition members with a sense of ownership in the plan.

The vision for the specific change effort must inspire organizational members. A vision makes decision making easier by eliminating many of the possible distracters. A shared vision is helpful throughout the organization. According to Kotter "With clarity of vision, managers and employees can figure out for themselves what to do without constantly checking with a boss or their peers." Kotter considers that including the following six characteristics is essential in an effective vision:

* Imaginable
* Desirable
* Feasible
* Focused
* Flexible
* Communicable ([Sabri](https://www.google.cz/search?hl=cs&tbo=p&tbm=bks&q=inauthor:%22Ehap+H.+Sabri%22), [Gupta](https://www.google.cz/search?hl=cs&tbo=p&tbm=bks&q=inauthor:%22Arun+P.+Gupta%22), [Beitler](https://www.google.cz/search?hl=cs&tbo=p&tbm=bks&q=inauthor:%22Michael+A.+Beitler%22), 2006).

**Step 4 - Communicate the vision and strategy for the specific change**

Kotter emphasizes the need to communicate at least 10 times the amount you expect to have to communicate. In addition, all the research about mergers and acquisitions indicates that it is impossible to over-communicate. Managers need to be creative with their communication strategies, and remember to work hard at getting the companies to build relationships at all levels.

The vision and accompanying strategies and new behaviours will need to be communicated in a variety of different ways: formal communications, role modelling, recruitment decisions and promotion decisions. The guiding coalition should be the first to role model new behaviours (Cameron, Green, 2004).

**Step 5 - Empower the employees for action**

This is the stage where your change initiative moves beyond the planning and the talking, and into practical action as you put supportive structures in place and empower and encourage your people to take risks in pursuit of the vision.

This is where you, as change leader, identify and remove obstacles and obstructions to change. These may arise in processes or structures that are getting in the way. This may also involve addressing resistant individuals and/or groups and helping them to reorient themselves to the requirements of the new realities (Practioners Masterclass, 2017).

A leader is any person who sets expectations for themselves and others, and then creates the environment for meeting those expectations.

What this all means is that the project team must now empower people to act, remove barriers to their contributions and success, and cheer them on (Davis, Radford, 2014).

**Step 6 - Generate short-term wins**

Success breeds success when it comes to change. In contrast, suspicions that the new ways of performing will simply be a waste of time and therefore will be abandoned will result in some employees deciding to take a "wait and see" approach with respect to change. In other words, instead of starting to follow policy, these employees may decide to wait until it goes away. If the organization can communicate the immediate benefits of the change (such as implementing the change on a pilot basis in one department, ensuring that it is successful, and communicating the results with excitement to other departments) this would reduce employee motivation to resist. Therefore, testing the change on a small scale, seeing if it works, and publicizing success and using it as leverage in motivating change in a different part of the organization will be helpful (Truxillo, Bauer, Erdogan, 2016).

Kotter have identified the following four common forms of resistance and ways of dealing with them:

1. Parochial self-interest: The members of the organization think they will have to lose something of value as a result of change, and they put their own interests over the best interests of the organization. This way of thinking often results in political behavior, occasionally taking the form of overt fighting but usually more subtle.
2. Misunderstanding and lack of trust: The members of the organization do not understand the rationale for the change and think the change will lose more than it will gain for the organization. Considering that many organizations have contentious relationships between managers and employees, employees often view any change effort with distrust and suspicion.
3. Low tolerance for change: Organization members often resist change because they fear they will be unable to adapt to the new organization, or they will not have the knowledge or skills to adapt.
4. Different assessment of the situation: Employees assess the situation differently from the change agents. They see more costs to the change than benefits, not only for themselves but for the organization as a whole. Furthermore, they do not discern any visible incentives or rewards for the organizational members to change (Proehl, 2001).

**Step 7 - Consolidate gains and produce more change.**

It's important to use the opportunity of any small wins to build momentum. Carefully choose next steps that can also be wins, to increase confidence and momentum (Rock, Page, 2009).

Persistence is the key to ensuring that all of the hard work in making changes is not lost. It can be easy to scrap something and quit altogether, but unfortunately all that does is ensure that the business and every other project team in the future has a much harder time making any kind of changes (Davis, Radford, 2014).

Step 7 is important in that many change agents think too quickly that they have already realized the change, whereas many changes require continuous effort, patience and a long time frame. Effective change agents realize this and constantly try to improve on the change effort, adjusting the change as it is implemented and as more feedback emerges as to what works and what does not (Cornelissen, 2017).

**Step 8 - Anchor the new changes in the culture**

The final, eighth, step involves articulating the connections between the new behaviour and overall corporate success - in other words, institutionalising change (Crawshaw, Budhwar, Davis, 2017).

Make continuous efforts to ensure the change is seen in every aspect of your organization. This will help give that change a solid place in your organization's culture (Onchiri, 2015).

Furthermore, leadership development and succession ensure that the organisation institutionalises the new approaches. In this way, the implemented changes become visible and get anchored in the organisational culture, which then avoids falling back on old routines and habits (Crawshaw, Budhwar, Davis, 2017).

**Advantages and disadvantages:**

**Significant advantages to the model are:**

* The process is an easy step-by-step model.
* The focus is on preparing and accepting change, not the actual change.
* Transition is easier with this model.

**However, there are some disadvantages offered by this model:**

* Steps can't be skipped.
* The process takes a great deal of time.
* It doesn't matter if the proposed change is a change in the process of project planning or general operations (Cartlidge, 2015).

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