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The Impact of the Change Message through the Phases of Change to Influence Readiness for and Resistance to Change; Findings from an Outsourcing Case Study

by

Paula O'Reilly

BA(Hons) in Human Resource Management

National College of Ireland

Submitted to National College of Ireland July 2015

Abstract

Ever increasing global competition and the rate of technological innovation has meant that companies in the 21st century have to change and adapt on a continual basis in order to survive in this dynamic and evolving business environment. In a bid to simultaneously achieve cost reduction and increase IT capability, companies are increasingly choosing to outsource activities to achieve their business goals. However attractive on paper, outsourcing can lead to fundamental changes for an organisation and its employees. Consequently, it also generates many challenges for leadership within the organisation to succeed with these changes. The efforts and activities an organisation undertakes to bring employees through a change program are critical to the program's success. These collective communication efforts and activities are referred to as the change message. Using a qualitative analysis of a case study, this dissertation explores how a company's strategy for communicating this change message impacts on change resistance and readiness through the phases of change. Findings from this study have shown that additional considerations such as enhancing the communications strategy can result in a more seamless, less antagonistic, and ultimately an enhanced likelihood of a successful change program.

Declaration

I confirm that the work included in this dissertation is my own original work, and any information included outside my own work is fully referenced.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Purpose and Objectives of Research

The aim of this research is to explore how the change message[1] can influence readiness for and resistance to change, through the three phases of change. The topic was selected as in the 21st century change has become a constant feature in companies, whether change is required to keep up with rapidly advancing technology or manage costs within an organisation. In a bid to become more flexible in terms of labour, cost and capability, companies are outsourcing non-core elements of their business to achieve cost savings and increase their competitive position in the marketplace. The literature, theories and models on change resistance and readiness will be examined, in addition to models for re-enforcing a change message.

The researcher aims to examine a case study to understand the participant's accounts and experiences of the transition program with the following objectives in mind:

(a) To examine employees understanding of the phases of change during the transition program.

(b) To explore the participants experience of the communications during the transition program in the context of the five key elements of the change message, as outlined in the theoretical framework for this research.

(c) To determine if the communication strategies or messages used during the transition program impacted their resistance to and readiness for the change that was planned.

[1] All activities and communications received by employees during a change program.

Background on case study:

A strategic decision was taken to outsource the technology department of a telecommunications company (referred to as company A), and for the employees this resulted in mandatory transfer into the managed service provider (referred to as company B). There were both strategic and operational drivers that led company A to the decision to outsource the technology department. In the late 2000's, the telecommunications industry went through significant technological change with mobile technology and the development of the smart phone providing new revenue opportunities for companies in the industry. Company A needed to build their technological capabilities to provide their clients with the mobile platforms on which to operate their business, in addition to reducing operating costs. The solution, it was decided, was to outsource the technology department to a company with the technology and capability to help company A deliver to their clients, the mobile technology they demanded.

As part of this transition program approximately 25% of company A's workforce were transferred into company B. Success of this program was essential as company A delivers a technology based service to its clients, so successful working of the technology department with its new managed service setup was critical to company A's continued business success.

The first phase of the transition program lasted six months and included selection of the managed service provider and due diligence phase, concluding with final contract negotiations. During this phase company A also established their program and communication plans for the next phase of the transition program. With all agreements in place, the next phase of the transition program began on the transition start date, with company A reviewing their business processes to establish company B responsibilities within those processes. During this time company A commenced communication activities and discussions with employees that were in scope for transferring to company B. The end of this second phase was marked by the Service Commencement date, at which time employees in scope to move transferred over to company B, and company B began providing a managed service to Company A. The final phase of the transition program lasted for three months after Service Commencement date.

The importance of managing the change message delivered to the transferring employees through the transition period was essential to ensure the overall success of the transition program and for continued business as usual operations in company A, after service commencement.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter focuses on a review of the literature on the topics of change management, change resistance and moving to change readiness through the change message. Theory on change management and a selection of frameworks associated with change management will be highlighted. The importance and recognition of resistance will be discussed and literature on moving from resistance to readiness for change through delivery of the change message will be presented.

Theoretical Framework

Change management is a complex topic with much research and discussion had since Lewin's 1951 ground breaking study on the phases of change forming a basis for the many change models developed since (Bennis 1969, Beckhard 1969, Kotter 1995). In the change readiness model developed by Armenakis *et al.* (2000) adoption and institutionalisation of change is emphasised, with the components of Discrepancy, Appropriateness, Valence, Efficacy and Principal Support identified as essential elements to incorporate into all change efforts, irrespective of the change model used. With rapid business environment changes, organisations must be capable of managing planned and unplanned change. In this context, resistance to change and how readiness is managed with communication of the change message through the phases of a change process will be examined in this research, using the Lewin Three Step model and Armenakis *et al.*'s (2000) change readiness models a guide for this research.

Change Management

Successful organisations in the 21st century need to be able to adapt to operate in markets and industries that are changing at a pace not seen before. In particular, the impact of globalisation and advances in technology has meant that companies are now operating in an increasingly complex and competitive business environment. Rapidly changing business environments means companies need to be able to adapt quickly. Indeed, research is now suggesting that organisations need to manage a range of different kinds of change simultaneously to survive (Newman 1999).

The changes that organizations undertake are many and varied, as are the reasons for starting change programs. Tichacek (2006) suggests the reasons for change are sometimes not clearly understood or identified resulting in the organisation being unable to benefit from isolating the cause and implementing the right process improvement. Planned change programs can be used to solve problems within teams, change perceptions or to improve department performance. Organisations can have numerous change programs occurring simultaneously with different units of their business and human resources involved, increasing the complexity of the change projects and their business operations (Simoes and Esposito 2014).

Change can be transformational as companies strive to improve their competitive position (Cummings and Worley 2008). Some organisations operate within a turbulent business environment with perpetual technological change and relentless competitive pressures. For these companies there is a need for change to be a continuous process with the unceasing ability to learn, change and adapt. Dealing with trans-organisational change is an additional change consideration for organisations that use mergers and acquisitions to build market share, capability and achieve operational efficiency.

Irrespective of types of change challenges different companies face and the source of these changes, or indeed the size of the change project “the outcome will be shaped by internal processes with the organization” (Neves 2009 p216). It is essential for an organisation to have the processes, capability and skills to manage and deal with change and the uncertainty that comes with it. Bolton (2004) suggests that to respond to the change challenge an organisation needs to understand its own resilience, and that of the individuals within it. Strength of leadership is vital with a clear link established between transformational leadership behaviours of managers and leaders and desired organisational outcomes (Brown and May 2012). Capabilities of the resources within an organisation are also critical for successful change, in particular dynamic capabilities which are seen as “a firm’s ability to rapidly integrate and re-configure resources to match a changing environment” (Shih-Yi and Cing-Han 2012). During change programs, change skills can also be transferred to those impacted by the change, which in turn helps with acceptance of the change, and provides the impacted group with the mechanism to deal with the ‘disorder’ created by the change process (Carter 2008). Leaders within an organisation should take time to establish which change model best suits their planned change as Self and Schraeder (2009) advise that failure can be mitigated with the right implementation planning. Choosing a change model can yield benefits and “by placing the change model as the primary focus of the change effort, employees at various levels of the organisation can understand the purpose of the change effort and can operationally realize what their tasks might be in relation to the change” (Boyd 2008, p17).

Change Models

Models for change management emerged from the research of the behavioural scientists in the 1940's and 1950's with the work of Kurt Lewin in particular setting the basic structure for many of the models developed since then. Lewin's basic premise of 'Unfreeze, Change, and Re-freeze', although provides the basis for transitional or planned change, contains a broad framework for understanding the steps needed for organisational change:

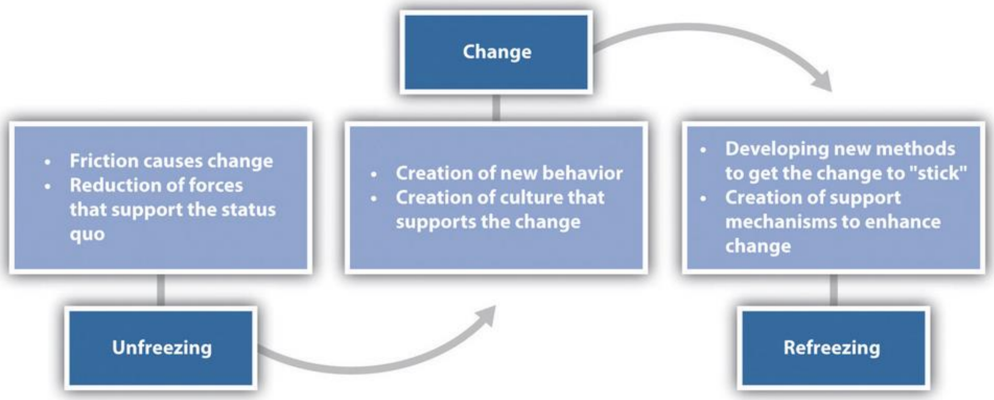

Figure 1. Kurt Lewin's Three Step Model for planned change

Source: taken from The Art of Leadership and Supervision

Lewin's force field analysis approach sees forces driving behaviour away from the status quo and forces restraining behaviour to maintain the status quo. For change to happen, driving forces need to increase and the restraining forces need to lessen. Taking this concept to the three step model, it is essential that driving forces for change are increased and forces that restrain change must be reduced (Hammond, Gresch, Vitale 2011). The second phase is concerned with changing the behaviours and attitudes by changing processes and structures within an organisation. The third phase seeks to move the new behaviours to a steady state, with a range of supports in place, such as Human Resource practices, to institutionalise the change.

Criticism of the Three Step Approach

Cummings and Worley (2008) argue that the stages within planned change models do not factor in different situations, and that the steps within the models are very general. They continue to emphasise that important factors such as organisation size, whether the change is national or global, in addition to the unplanned events that happens during the change process can all mean that some of the stages may require modification. Burnes (2004) summarised criticisms on Lewin's transitional model from a number of sources, opining that it was simplistic, relevant only to isolated change projects, does not consider power or political struggles in organisations and takes a top-down approach. He continued to argue that this is all down to interpretation, and that ultimately Lewin took a humanist approach to change, and that behavioural change required both involvement and learning processes.

Since the 1980's researchers have become increasingly critical of the planned change approach arguing that it assumes that organisations operate in constant conditions (Hudescu and Ilies 2011). An emergent approach has evolved which views change as a process rather than a set of linear events, driven from the bottom up (Burnes 2004). This approach views change happening at different times and at different levels with the organisation helping it to adapt to a more rapidly changing business environment. One could argue that this is the approach that is needed for successful change in a 21st century business environment. John Kotter's 8-step model, developed in the mid 1990's is considered by some as an emergent model which can be mapped back to Lewin's three stages (Todnem, 2005). Appelbaum, Habashy, Malo and Shafiq (2012) discuss the importance Kotter places on executing the steps in the right order, further suggesting that Kotter's model lacks underpinning research despite remaining very popular. They offer an explanation for this popularity in that the model is directed at end users involved in managing change rather than at change theorists. Another change model developed in the late 1990's is Rosabeth Moss Kanter's 'Change Wheel'. This approach expands the number of steps for change further and is focused on continuous change, with ten elements essential to the process of change. The elements include a change message, signs that change will happen, accountability for managing the change, education, change champions, quick wins, communication, system alignments, change milestones and recognition. This toolkit for change is an online toolkit to assist organisations in the 21st century, with the concept of the wheel implying that no one element comes first, that change can start at many points and that all elements are essential for the whole to keep turning (Webber 2002).

Irrespective of the range of change models developed and the differing opinions and criticism, Lewin's three basic phases still form the core of many change models today. It is essential, whatever model or approach is selected, that organisations prepare properly and understand resistance and its sources, to be ready for, to achieve and to sustain changes.

Resistance to Change

Resisting change in whatever form is human nature, and "although this resistance is natural, failing to change can be deadly" (Gilley, Godek and Gilley 2009, p4). What is resistance? When and why does it occur? Kotter (1995) sees resistance as an obstacle that curtails change within an organisation. Resistance generally happens when people reach an understanding on how change will impact them personally. Engaging in discussions will help reveal the underlying reasons for their concerns (Gilley *et al.* 2009). Simoes and Esposito (2014) discuss how change resistance can depend strongly on the ways information is provided and participation is facilitated and conclude that, in the management of resistance to change, communication is a task for HR, in addition to individual departments, as it's an organisational concern as well as an individual concern. Additionally, it must be recognised that resistance to change not only comes from employees, but from the different levels of management (Palmer, Dunford and Akin 2006).

Attitudes to resistance can be tri-dimensional, with affective, cognitive and behavioural elements all having implications for how organisation members feel about the change and how they will behave as the change is being implemented (Piderit 2000). Although these elements are interlinked, each one represents a different perspective on resistance which could inform plans to manage the resistance.   Self and Schraeder (2009) continue the discussion on resistance dimensions categorising them into personal, organisational and change specific factors. For personal factors they argue that "anything in an individual's environment which poses a threat to their security could be potential source of resistance" (Self and Schraeder 2009 p170). An important element of organisational factors include people's perceptions of the organisation's ability to execute change projects effectively and that earlier unsuccessful change projects may give rise to cynicism within the company's employees (Armenakis and Harris 2002). Palmer *et al.* (2006) suggests that there may be resistance to organisational change because so many changes are ongoing at the same time. The final dimension identified by Self and Schraeder (2006) is related to the content of the change being proposed. If people feel that the change is not required or appropriate, this will lead to resistance. Employees can view the proposed change as a threat, even if the change proposed is positive (Gilley *et al.* 2009).

It is vital that employees feel free to share their concern and show their resistance to a change project, as it can provide vital information to help the success of a change program. "Resistance, properly understood as feedback, can be an important resource in improving the quality and clarity of the objectives and strategies at the heart of a change proposal" (Ford and Ford 2009 p103). Self and Schraeder (2009 p177) suggest that "management should never assume that the reason resistance to a particular change initiative is occurring is because people don't like change". They propose that it can actually demonstrate real bravery to stand up to management, but also that the resistance could be based on real issues with the change initiative and could provide insight into problems with the change program.

When analysing the literature on change resistance, it could be argued that the process of resistance is part of the 'Unfreezing' phase in the change program and that an organisations reaction to this resistance can actually support or enhance the management of readiness for the change ahead. Berneth (2004) suggests that communication is the answer and that it should be the main instrument for developing readiness within an organisation.

Moving from resistance to readiness using the change message

The concept of readiness lies in the 'unfreezing' stage of Lewin's model for change, where employees need to let go of the current way of doing things (Self and Schraeder 2009). Armenakis *et al.* (2000) took the view that readiness was the point at which a person, when evaluating the change made a decision to support or resist the change. Self and Schraeder (2009) suggest that if this first step in the change process is properly executed, employees will be more likely to accept and adopt the change. The price of failed change programs are high, with Smith (2005) concluding that the people within an organisation can either make or break a program. There are a number of considerations for change programs, to facilitate moving from resistance towards readiness, all of which can be managed through appropriate communication strategies. Recognising the social dynamics at play and strategies to convey the change message all need to be factored into planning a successful change program.

Social dynamics of employee groups and their inter-related relationships are important factors when managing change within an organisation. Bernerth (2004) suggests that members of an organisation will look to each other to understand the meaning of events and it is important to recognise that employee groups can be influenced by their peers in addition to any action by change agents or the leadership team. When discussing conduct of an individual and the influence of group standards Lewin found that it is more difficult to change one person than it is to change a group of individuals that are part of a group (Lewin 1997).

Manager/employee relationships play a key role in success of change programs with Miller, Madsen and Cameron (2006) concluding that a managers relationship with their team is critical in building their teams readiness for change. Additionally, by just including employees in a change program, it not only facilitates two way communication but also sends a message to the employee that their contributions to the change are valued and they are included in the decision making process because they are trusted (Self and Schraeder 2009). Additionally, organisational culture should also be considered, and with the right management can become "an essential contributor to the success of a change initiative" (Gilley *et al.* 2009, p7).

Getting the Change Message right

Armenakis *et al.* (2000) analysis of readiness for change asserted that readiness is created by the message that employees receive from management about the change and that this message can help develop commitment. The change message can be viewed as all activities an organisation undertakes to inform employees of the planned change. Communication is a key mechanism for developing readiness for change in an organisation and priority needs to be placed on developing the communications to be given to the organisations members. Armenakis *et al.* (2000) identified the important components of a change message, discrepancy, appropriateness, valence, efficacy and principal support as a means to dealing with resistance and facilitating readiness for the change. Change is always accompanied by uncertainty, so focusing on delivering a structured change message which includes the right components, will manage readiness from the start of the program. Hammond *et al.* (2011) also suggest that including issues that are of concern to employees in the change message will help mould their attitudes towards supporting the change.

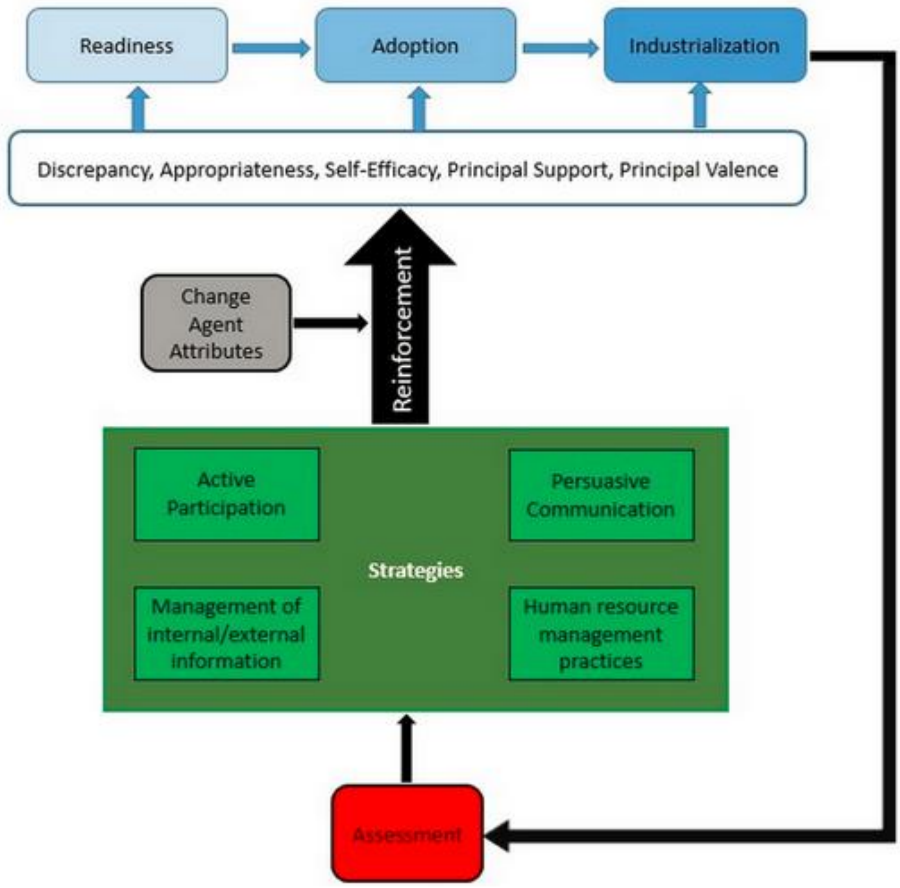

Figure 2: Graphical outline of the Change Readiness Model (Armenakis *et al.* 2000) identifying crucial elements to build institutionalisation of change

Discrepancy

The first essential component of the message is discrepancy. "Discrepancy is defined as the difference between the current state and an ideal or desired state" (Self and Schraeder 2009, p172). At its essence it is about making sure employees and the organisation that the change is necessary, that there's a sense of urgency. It is important that changes in the external business environment backup the argument for change within the organisation (Pettigrew 1987). Pettigrew continues suggesting that change is sometimes precipitated by crisis in the business environment, but that it is important to examine the pre-crisis antecedents, which can include industry norms for strategy and process, to help frame the right change for an organisation. Oreg (2006) suggest that these different types of antecedents as demonstrated by different types of resistance, point to different actions to alleviate the resistance. This information can all help inform the change message to ensure discrepancy is evident and organisation members see that change is required and urgent.

Lewin demonstrated how getting a group to come to a decision on changing can be an effective way to establish discrepancy and move from unfreezing to the change phase (Lewin 1997). A group of housewives (group A) were lectured on the benefits of consuming fresh milk, and the other group (group B) were given information and came to a decision together that increasing fresh milk consumption would be beneficial. After four weeks, consumption of milk in group B increase by 50% and consumption of milk in group A increased by only 10%. It was clear that the group that came to a decision through discussion, that they should make a change, did so through recognising that a change was needed.

Appropriateness

Once it is recognised within an organisation that change is needed, the next question is, what is the proposed change intended to improve? In order for change to succeed, there must be a belief that the change proposed is the right course of action. Carter (2008), when discussing the complexities of change processes, suggests that organisations not only need a clear understanding of what should change, but also what should not change. There may be agreement on the requirement for change, but getting organisations employees to agree on a course of action may be difficult (Armenakis and Harris 2002). It is important however to acknowledge and assess resistance and feedback from employee groups. If a change message does not convince an employee group for the need for change, efforts should be made to assess whether or not the change proposed is actually appropriate (Armenakis and Harris 2002). In addition to getting agreement on appropriateness of a change, the proposed change should be the right fit for the organisation in terms of culture, structure and systems (Self and Schraeder 2009).

Valence

This element is concerned with how the individual within an organisation understands how the change will impact or benefit them. It is very important, when communicating with change targets, that a clear message is conveyed on how the change will benefit them, otherwise resistance will result (Armenakis and Harris 2002). Self and Schraeder (2009) deduce from their research that if organisation members cannot see a clear benefit from the change, or if they feel the effort to make the change outweighs potential benefits, they will most likely resist the change. Klein and Sorra (1996) conclude that if employees perceive the change aligns with their own values, they are more like to support the change.

Efficacy

"Individuals will only be motivated to attempt a change to the extent that they have confidence that they can succeed" (Armenakis and Harris 2002, p170). Bandura (1982) suggests that individuals will only undertake activities they believe they are capable of completing. Bernerth (2004) discusses how employees can be consumed with doubt during periods of change and that it can lead to reduced performance. Self and Schraeder (2009) contend that previous failures by leadership in preparing employee groups and the organisation for change, can lead to doubt about the completion of another change program. When implementing a change program, belief in one's ability to effect change is vital to a successful outcome. Armenakis, Harris and Mossholder (1993) recommend that change agents build organisational members efficacy in regard to planned changes by building their confidence in their ability to correct the obvious discrepancy. Neves (2009) suggests that building efficacy up slowly will mean minimum stress from discarding old behaviours.

Principal Support

This essential message component is concerned with gaining support for the change. Employees, if they have seen numerous failed change efforts in the past, may have issues supporting this new change, unless strong support of this change is visible to them (Armenakis and Harris 2002). Those who support the planned change, known as change agents, are the group most likely to support it through to institutionalisation. These members of the change team are vital to providing information and encouraging others to support the change program (Armenakis *et al.* 2000). Larkin and Larkin (1994) also noted that frontline or first line management were the group that were most influential in convincing employees to support a change program. Self and Schraeder (2009) continue on that theme of first line management influence stating that it is to the front line manager that an employee often turns to better understand the meaning and reason for the change. It is important that change agents are identified that support the change, and who will recruit other change targets to support the change. "Establishing clear goals for the change effort, launching aggressive communication and training efforts, and promotion opportunities for employee participation" (Weber and Weber 2001, p298) will all positively influence employee attitudes to the change program.

Considerations for change implementation

When building support and implementing change programs organisations must realise that “adoption of a new idea or practice is influenced by how the change is communicated” (Gilley *et al.* 2009, p5). In addition to executing a plan for change, it is critical for organisations to consider how the change message is delivered. Self and Schraeder (2009) suggest that that each of the change message components are inter-related and that examining the sources of resistance such as personal, organisational or change specific factors, will help build a change message that will reduce resistance.

Any person within the organisation that is involved in building support for and implement a change program, can be considered a change agent. As organisations execute their change programs, the actions of change agents have a direct impact on reinforcing or diminishing the change message in terms of the five change message components (Armenakis *et al.* 2000). Strategies such as active participation, persuasive communications and management of external sources of information can be used by change agents to build commitment for a change program (Armenakis *et al.* 1993). Simoes and Esposito (2014) further emphasise that promoting genuine engagement of employees in a change program is essential, if resistance is to be managed and organisational change achieved.

Conclusion

This review of the literature has demonstrated that as a company is moving through the phases of change, the change message that organisation members receive should incorporate essential components which have been shown to be effective in reducing resistance to change. The message components of discrepancy, appropriateness, valence, efficacy and principal support need to be accounted for, so that resistance to change is managed to build organisational members readiness for that change, throughout all the phases of change. Although all five components are essential, the literature does not identify whether these components have equal weighting in a change program or if some components have greater influence in building support for a change program. Further research is required to determine the relative influence of these components.

Chapter 3 – Research Methodology

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to outline the different methodological approaches that can were applied in this study, to outline the particular approach taken for this piece of research and to discuss the reasoning behind the selected research method.

Research Perspectives

When embarking on the research process it is essential to understand the different approaches or ways of working (paradigms) that can be taken. Understanding the different research paradigms and where a particular research project sits in relation to these paradigms helps a researcher ensure the right research methodology is employed to best address the research questions. Interpretivism and Positivism as outlined below are two research approaches used to examine "how we seek knowledge and how we use it" (Thomas 2013 p106). These research philosophies inform the research methods, which will in turn help the researcher select the methods for data collection (Quinlan 2011).

Interpretivism

Interpretivism is essentially opposite to Positivism, and is concerned with exploring why the actions or reasons lead to a pattern of behaviour. Taking an interpretative approach to research leads the researcher to question beyond measurements with the key being understanding and interpreting. Interpretive research lends itself to a qualitative approach which helps a researcher "understand the human experience in a given context" (Ana, 2009, p55). The researcher aims to understand everything from questions being answered to body language with the intention of helping them comprehend the behaviours and views of others (Thomas 2013). Wright and Losekoot (2012) acknowledge with this type of approach the researcher needs to immerse themselves in the research but cautions that objectivity is difficult with the boundaries of life and the world ever present, no matter how much they aim for objectivity. On the other hand the positivistic paradigm approaches research in an objective manner where the "world can be observed, measured and studied scientifically (Thomas 2013, p107). Taking a positivistic approach to research lends itself to a quantitative method of data collection and enables the researcher to remain independent of the subject being examined. Positivistic researchers tend to "seek cause/effect explanations….and generally reduce everything to the utmost simplicity to facilitate analyses" (Ana 2009, p55).

The positivistic approach was not chosen as a method to address the question in this research project because results from positivistic research are specific and measurable with objective results. This study requires flexibility to further explore issues that arise to enhance the analysis of the theory. Hence, for this research, an interpretative approach was taken as the aim of the research was to delve deeper into the employees' understanding of the change process, the communication received by employees from their employer on the proposed changes, and if that influenced their resistance to or support of the planned change.

Research Design

The structure and plan for the research known as the research design is often described as the "chassis that supports" (Thomas 2013, p133) the research. The research design is a fundamental part of the overall research methodology (Quinlan 2011). There are a wide range of research designs, or design frames as they are sometimes known, that can be used to structure research projects. The various designs available lend themselves either to qualitative or quantitative methods of data gathering, or can utilise both. Table 1 provides a list of commonly used design frames (as discussed by Thomas 2013).

Table 1: Commonly used Design Frames for Qualitative Research and their application within the research.

Design Frame	**How it is used in research**
Action Research	Action research takes a cyclical approach to solving problems. Research is followed by critical reflection which leads to change.
Case Study	In-depth research, with the aim of discovering in-depth knowledge, of a single case or a small number of chases.
Ethnography	Research of a situation or subject from within. Typically used in social research to study communities or cultures.
Evaluation	An often used research methodology that evaluates the effectiveness of a program of activity. Unlike action research, with this method there is no assumption of feedback to the program being evaluated.
Grounded Theory	The aim is to build theory from a set of data. This approach is useful for research in an area where little research has been completed.
Longitudinal or Cross Sectional Studies	This type of research uses data on large numbers of groups or individuals over longer periods of time,

	with the aim of evaluating the data to establish or examine trends in relation to one or more variables.

Previously, it was emphasised that research philosophies inform the design of the research, so it is vital to consider this when finalising the research design. For the purposes of this research project and when examining which design frames would best support and fit the aim of this interpretive led research, Grounded Theory, Case Study and Evaluation were examined as potential design frame fits.

Following further examination, both grounded theory and evaluation were deemed unsuitable for the purposes of this study for the following reasons. Grounded theory, which focuses on theory creation was deemed unsuitable because the study aim is not to create new theory in the area of change management as there is extensive research and theory existing in this area. Evaluation, sometimes considered positivist in nature, can be used in interpretive lead research to evaluate the effectiveness of a program of activity. Evaluation was considered as a design frame for this research and although the researcher acknowledges that examining the "before, during and after" (Thomas 2013, p161) would provide valuable information for the research, another research design was deemed more suitable for this specific research to provide flexibility to extract rich detail.

After examination of the various design frames the researcher deemed the Case Study as the most appropriate design frame to address the research question. Yin (2014) discusses three considerations that inform the selection of a research methodology. Researchers must consider the form of the research question being asked (how, why, what), whether the research needs to control behavioural events, and does it focus on contemporary situations. For this research, selection of a case study will facilitate answering the question on ‘how’ the change message impacted the change resistance and readiness, and with the scope to utilise different data collection methods and flexibility to extract in-depth detail on the research area.

Case Study

A case study can be described as “an in-depth study of a bounded entity” Quinlan (2011 p102). The aim when using a case study as a research methodology is to obtain a detailed and rich understanding of a case with the ability to combine different data collection methods to enhance the understanding in the context of the research question. It is important to note that when utilising a case study as a design framework, the researcher does not study a specific case to understand others, but just the case itself. Thomas (2013) further elaborates on this suggesting that while case studies are essentially a restricted sample used, they are beneficial in providing greater insights to illuminate on specific theory. Case studies can be exploratory, descriptive or explanatory. This research project is an exploratory case study with the Transition Program being the entity explored to determine if the change message impacts readiness for and resistance to change.

Data Collection Methods

Quantitative and Qualitative Data Collection

When undertaking research, data can be gathered either using a qualitative or quantitative approach or a combination of both. Quantitative data collection can be described as turning data gathered into numbers to enable objective analysis and where a “neutral value-free position” (Robson 2011, p19) can be taken. Because this data collection approach is concerned with specific numerical measures and factual in nature there is little or no flexibility to delve for further insights if significant new information comes to light, this data collection method was not deemed appropriate for this research project.

The qualitative data collection method can be used by researchers to "understand individuals' perception of the world" (Bell 2010, p5). Advocates of this data collection method believe, because social research involves interactions between people, the positivist approach is not suitable (Robson 2011). With the exploratory nature of this research project, a qualitative approach to data collection was deemed most appropriate. This allowed the researcher to collect in depth detail on the case study and facilitated the gathering of detailed information about employee's experiences through the transition program.

Triangulation of Research Data

Triangulation could be described as "convergence of methods producing more objective and valid results" Jonsen and Jehn (2009 p125) and suggest that triangulation increases the credibility of a piece of research. While it was not possible within the limitations of this study, supplementary information in the form of transition program documents were acquired to provide additional context to the research. Addressing methodological triangulation in a research project supports the validity of the research, although some researchers claim that "a piece of interpretative research has value and completeness in itself" (Thomas 2013 p146).

Gathering the Research Data

Primary Data

As this research project is informed by an interpretivist perspective and with the intent to collect qualitative data, interviews were considered as the data collection option. Bell (2010) when discussing case studies suggests that interviews, along with observation, are the most common form of data collection when research is being carried out on a case study. The interview as a data collection method is a “flexible and adaptable way of finding things out” (Robson 2011 p280). Using interviews as the primary data collection method was selected for this research project as they provide the structure of pre-planned questions, the option of further exploring new topics that arise during the conversation, and enables the interviewee themselves to provide additional perspective not previously considered by the researcher.

In addition to participant interviews, two further interviews were held with a manager from Company A and B. The manager from Company A was the project lead for the Transition program and provided valuable detail on the communication plans for the program. The manager from Company B was the person responsible for managing the transition of the employees into their new company, and she provided great detail on Company B’s responsibilities in terms of communications through the transition program. These interviews provided context on the intentions and plans for the program from both companies perspectives, and informed the preparation of the participant interviews.

Supplementary information provided to the researcher

Four transition program documents were released to the researcher for the purposes of providing context to the transition program that was being implemented. These documents provided background to the participant interviews. They were as follows:

- Program Charter which outlined high level goals of the transition program, the elements of the business that were in/out of scope for the transition program, key deliverables of the teams put in place to lead the transition program.
- Change Champion Training pack which was given to a selected number people identified as change champions for the transition program.
- Communications Strategy and Plan for the transition program. This included the communications strategy and its objectives, and the communication plan which outlined the plans and the types of communication that would be used during the transition program.

Population and Sample

Robson (2011) describes the population as the total number of cases, with a sample being a selection from that population. The population for this research project is the total number of employees that were selected to move from Company A to Company B as part of the transition program. The selected sample from that population was a convenience sample as it does not represent all employee levels and departments within the group of employees moving to Company B. The researcher considered the twelve employees selected for interview as the sample for this research project. The researcher aimed to include in the sample employees with differing lengths of service and to achieve balance in terms of participant representation from the each of the departments that had employees being transferred into Company B. The researcher also included two managers in the sample as they provided a different perspective from the non-management employees, on the transition program communications.

Interviews

Interviews were the source of primary data for this research project. Thomas (2013) discusses the advantages of interviews suggesting that the personal contact with the interviewee provides richer responses and that the researcher will better understand the responses to the questions asked. For this research the interviews were semi-structured, with one interview face to face, and three telephone interviews. This allowed the researcher discuss the topics necessary for the research, with the opportunity for the researcher to gain further rich detail from the interview.

All interviewees were initially contacted by email, outlining the intention of the research and inviting them to participate in the research. In total, twelve people were contacted as potential participants, with the research receiving six responses from employees willing to be interviewed. Due to timing constraints one participant was not interviewed, and one other participant failed to attend their interview. In total four participants were interviewed for this research.

The interview guide was developed using the theoretical frameworks developed by Lewin (1952) and Armenakis *et al.* (2000). Questions aimed to examine participant's understanding of the change phases, their experiences of resistance and readiness for the planned change, and to establish if the five message components as defined by Armenakis *et al.* (2000) influenced that resistance and readiness. A copy of the semi-structured interview guide can be found in Appendix A and a transcript of one of the interviews can be found in Appendix B.

In total, four semi-structured interviews were held with employees who were transferring from company A into company B. All four people and the two managers from company A and company B participated in this research with the explicit knowledge and guarantee that they remained anonymous throughout this research process and that no data would be used to identify the individual or company. All four participants were members of four different teams within company A. The profile of the four participants can be found in table 2 below:

Table 2: Profile of participants that took part in this research project.

Participants	Job Level	Years with Company @ Service Commencement Date	Gender	Research Code
Participant 1	Team Member	9.5	F	P1
Participant 2	Team Member	1	F	P2
Participant 3	Team Lead	10	F	P3
Participant 4	Manager	1.5	M	P4

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Robson (2011) stressed the need for a systematic approach when analysing qualitative data, suggesting that the bulk of data must be reduced to manageable amount to help the research draw conclusions from the research. With qualitative analysis, "themes or categories are the essential building blocks of your analysis" (Thomas 2013 p235). For the purposes of this research project, the researcher completed a thematic coding and analysis with interview transcripts reviewed numerous times to identify words, themes and topics. An initial set of themes and codes were established from the theoretical framework outlined earlier in Chapter 2 and new codes and themes evolved from the analysis of the primary and supplementary information.

Thematic analysis is described by Silverman (2011) as the tools for analysis, rather than being the analysis itself. The researcher explored within the identified themes and sub-themes to identify patterns across the data and then linked the findings back to the body of knowledge explored in the literature review in Chapter 2. All thematic analysis of the data was completed manually.

Ethics

Addressing ethics during a research project is vital to ensure the research avoids causing "harm, stress and anxiety" (Robson 2011 p194) to any of the participants. For this research project, permission was given to access documents on the condition that no confidential company information was revealed and that the company's involved could not be identified.
For each interview undertaken, the researcher initially contacted the participant by email, outlining the research question and reason for contacting the participant. Before each interview, the researcher requested the participant's permission to record the interview and confirmed that no names or other information that would identify them would be used in this document. The researcher assured all participants that all information gathered from them would be used in the strictest of confidence and that recordings would be deleted on completion of the research project. In addition, the participants were informed that they were free to end the interview at any stage and have their recordings withdrawn from the study.

Conclusion

To establish the most suitable research design to answer the research question, the researcher examined different approaches to research and the different options for research design. An interpretative approach was taken and an exploratory case study selected as the right choice for the research design. The researcher chose to collect data through the qualitative methods of interviews and document reviews. A sample of twelve participants was deemed an appropriate representation of the population and thematic coding and analysis was selected to analyse the data gathered.

The findings from and the analysis of the research carried out are presented and discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 4 – Research Findings

Introduction

The aim of this research was to explore how the message for change can influence readiness for and resistance to change, through the three phases of change. Primary data was gathered for this research with supplemental information providing additional context to the researcher.

Themes arising from Data Analysis

Prior to participant interviews an initial discussion was held with company A's transition program lead to understand the business drivers for the decision to outsource part of their business to another company. The decision had implications in that it resulted in 25% of company A's workforce being transferred to company B as part of the overall outsourcing agreement. This meeting also afforded the researcher the opportunity to ask questions on the program documents that were provided to the researcher as part of this process. As a result of this meeting the rationale was established on the business reasons company A had for initiating the transition program.

An additional meeting was held with the manager leading the Human Resource element of the transition program in company B. This meeting provided further context to the information provided to the group of employees, from company B, before the transfer into company B. It also provided insight into the issues that were raised after the employees transitioned and were establishing their new working relationship with company A as new employees of company B.

In total, four semi-structured telephone interviews took place, following recruitment by email. All four participants are former employees of company A, and are now full time employees of company B, as a result of this transition program. The profile of the participants interviewed for this research are outlined in table 2 in chapter 3. The group of participants interviewed included three different levels of employee within company A: a manager, a senior team lead and two team members.

The structure of the interview guide was informed by the theoretical framework of this research. The interviews focused on the phases of change, and how the participant perceived that the communications they received and their experiences through the process, influenced their readiness for and resistance to the change that was planned. The full set of interview questions can be found in Appendix A. The data gathered from the interviews were categorised under codes developed from the theoretical framework and additional codes that were identified from the analysis of interviews. Table 3 outlines the themes and sub-themes that arose from the analysis of the data:

Table 3: Themes and sub-themes identified from this research.

Theme	***Sub-Themes***
Moving through the Change Process	Awareness of change phases Employee involvement Unforeseen Opportunity identified through the change process
Leadership	Attitudes of Managers through the Transition Program Perceived leadership benefits

Change Communications	Components of the change message Communication of the Business reasons for transition program Evidence of change readiness Evidence of resistance to change

Theme 1: Moving through the Change Process

Awareness of the Phases of Change

The phases of this transition program to outsource the technology department from company A to company B were clearly aligned to the program plan. The documents provided to the researcher showed that the transition program had a span of approximately fifteen months with preparation for the change taking six months, the transition taking six months, and a settling in period of three months. There was a definite stop of the transition phase, with the service commencement date marking the move into the 'refreezing' (service commencement) stage of the program. For this type of change program, there is a definite end date, when the new way of working must become 'business as usual'. Although Burnes (2004) argues that Kurt Lewin's Three Step model for change is simplistic, the three different phases of this transition program clearly map back to these three phases. Part of the 'unfreezing' phase included the recognition by the business that change was needed to survive the pace of technological change in the telecommunications industry. Consultations continued and plans for the transition phase, with clear start and end dates, within which both company A and company B worked together to define the new way of working. The end result was an agreement between the two companies that started on the Service Commencement Date, which signalled a move into service commencement.

The participants were asked about their understanding of the different phases the transition program went through, and when they became aware of the transition program:

P4: "As a manager I was involved in some of the discussions when deciding on the outsourcing company. Once the decision was made communications started, and plans were finalised…the transition start date and the service commencement date were agreed so we knew what the key dates were."
P3: "After the decision was made I was told by my manager when the transition date was. I knew the service commencement date was very clearly the point at which we moved into the new way of working. On that date the new practices were adopted and we all had to follow Company B processes before we were allowed to do any work for Company A. The last part was probably the most difficult."

An important aspect of the plans for this transition program was that after the service commencement date during the 'refreezing' stage, the group of employees transferring from company A, became employees of company B, and remained at company A's office location. The HR manager from company B discussed how the commencement of service marked the date when the group of employees from company A, were now employees of company B. This occasion was marked with an event hosted by company B for the newly transferred group of employees. Further probing of the interviewees provided evidence on the adjustments that they had to make as new employees of company B, while still working on the premises of company A.

P4: "After the service commencement date we physically moved to a different part of company B. The relationship changed from employer to client which was very strange. We changed our behaviours – we had to think about how we related to our old colleagues. We couldn't just ask them to do us a favour – anything we needed from our old colleagues we had to formally request."

The service commencement date marked the entry into the final phase of the transition program, and the service commencement event ensured employees understood this important stage in the transition. This new phase meant that the transferred group of employees would effectively be working as service providers to their former employers.

Employee Involvement in the Transition program

Employee involvement in the transition program varied between the participants interviewed. The evidence showed that there was a clear divide in terms of involvement in the transition program between those in leadership roles, and those that were not in leadership roles. Both the manager and the team lead that were interviewed were actively involved in the transition program, contributed to the discussions and decisions made on the changing business processes. Self and Schrader (2009) suggest that involvement in change program activities sends a message to employees that their contributions are valued and that they are trusted. This involvement afforded the manager and the team lead the opportunity to ask questions and understand the transition program better. P3, a team lead, stated:

"I had to attend a lot of the meetings, so I was involved in planning the changes for the business processes. I had the chance to go to a number of meetings to discuss the changes planned."

P4, the manager discussed his involvement:
"I felt that there were different levels of engagement from people within my team. For me, I was involved in the employee forum discussing our rights and challenging management for better benefits. I was involved in the agreeing what changes had to be made to the business process for the change to occur."

From the data analysed, P3 and P4 had more involvement in the transition program as a result of their position in the organisation. Involvement for participants P1 and P2 was limited to discussions within the team meetings and communications received as a result of the transition program.

The program documentation examined by the researcher showed that there were a number of employees selected to act as champions for change. The intention was that these chosen employees could provide information as required within the different groups of employees transferring to company B. As part of their training these 'champions' were expected to be able to give a three minute elevator pitch to describe the reason for and the goals of the transition program. P4 recalled *"I do remember the change champions, I got some information from them".* The importance of having change agents within the teams has been stressed by Armenakis *et al.* (2000) suggesting that change agents provide social support generating commitment to a change program being undertaken. In planning this change, the management of company A recognised that the social dynamics of the teams would help build support for the transition program, aligning with Bernerth's (2004) view that during uncertain times, employees will look to each other to better understand events taking place.

Unforeseen Opportunity identified through the change process

A strong theme that featured among all the interviewees was their view that this transition program provided them with different opportunities. At different stages of the program three out of the four interviewees all came to a decision that this change would be a personal opportunity for them in terms of their long term career. P1, a team member, discussed that although in her opinion this change was the wrong course of action for the company, it was in her own personal interest for the change program to be a success. This aligns with Self and Schraeder's (2009) contention that if an employee can identify a personal long term benefit in a change program that they are more likely to support the change. Other participant comments included:

P3: "We received invites from the new company to talk about roles in the company, how the company worked, communications in terms of benefits…all of those things that you don't think about…you realise ok, that's good."
P2: "This was a global company, so for me I thought it would be a good move."
P4: "Some people saw it as a massive opportunity".

Additionally, during the transition period, when preparing the business processes for change, two of the participants identified this activity as an opportunity to highlight to the senior leadership in Company A the extent of the work they did within the teams and the complexity of their roles.

Theme 2 - Leadership

Attitudes of Managers through the Transition Program

A clear theme to emerge was the different attitudes of line managers to the change, and the influence this had on their teams in relation to the transition program. One participant highlighted that her manager's tone of voice changed, even his body language, when discussing the transition program. Another participant comments on manager attitudes included:

P3: "He took a step back from the moment it was announced."
P4: "He focused on what his role would be in the new organisation."

Self and Schraeder (2009) discuss the importance and the impact of the first line manager on an employee's readiness for change stating that it's to their first line manager that employees look to when trying to make sense of a planned change. P3 suggested that, during the transition program, the attitude and lack of support from her first line manager made her *"look forward more to moving"* to company B. There were also positive management attitudes evident in the transition program as P4 (a manager) discussed:

P4: "I felt as a manager I had to work for my people through this change process, represent them as best I could."

As mentioned in chapter 2, Brown and May (2012) emphasise that strong transformational leadership behaviours can lead to desired organisational outcomes. P4 highlighted the behaviours of one of the company B senior managers during the last phase of the transition program, when service had commenced and the group of employees were transferred from company A to company B:

P4:"The manager that was put in charge of our team after the transition date had a very positive effective on the team. He sat among the team, despite being offered an office, and guided and settled us through the early weeks. He brought a calmness to the thing".

P4 emphasised the difference that this manager made to the team, his approach in managing the transferred employees helped them settle in to their new roles and helped them deal with company A as clients, rather than their employers.

Perceived Leadership Benefits

As interviews progressed with participants, it became clear that for the manager and the team leader involved in the transition program, there were advantages and disadvantages to being a leader during the transition program. Both of these two participants were involved in transition program meetings and the decisions made as the program progressed:

P4: "I felt I had a lot of information available to me through the entire time. I had to attend a lot of meetings related to the change so felt I really understood everything that was happening over that time. This gave me confidence to challenge senior leadership when I thought the wrong choice was being made on a decision."

P3: "I had the chance to go to a number of meetings to discuss the changes planned…I felt I contributed to the decisions being made".

P4: "…as a manager I had some information in the early stages."

Armenakis *et al.* (2000) suggest that active involvement in a change program helps employees better understand the reasons for the changes as they observe others that support the change. But this involvement can give rise to some issues as explained by P4 (the manager):

"…because of my role I did feel in the middle…making it happen on one side through the business process change meetings, and challenging it on the other through the employee forum and representing my own team. There was a lot to balance."

On balance it is clear from discussions with participants P3 and P4 that they were more involved in the transition program activities and this gave them the opportunity to discuss, challenge and contribute to the decisions being made.

Theme 3 - Change Communications

Components of the Change Message

Overall, the participants felt there was a wide range of communications on the transition program, with communication methods including team meetings, town hall meetings and regular emails on progress of the program. Essential elements of the change message were explored during the interviews. Armenakis *et al.* (2000) discuss that when a change is planned or is occurring, it can create a great deal of confusion and uncertainty and the most effective way to alleviate concerns is to use the change message (change efforts) to create positive momentum for the change to support adoption and institutionalisation of that change.   In order for employees to believe a change is necessary, they must believe that it is needed, otherwise there will be no incentive to change (Self and Schraeder 2009). From the evidence gathered there was a mix of attitudes from participants on whether the transition program was needed (discrepancy), with three out of the four participants, at the start of the program, believing no change was needed.

P1: "I didn't think the change was necessary, no".
P3: "No, I didn't feel it was necessary".

On further discussion with the participants, it emerged that the issue was more related to the course of action that was decided on by company A, rather than on the necessity of the change. P1 (team member) and P3 (team lead) believed the change being undertaken was not appropriate and other alternatives should have been explored:

P3: "I think they took the easy option out, as opposed to looking internally and making it more effective and efficient."
P1: "I didn't think the managed service provider was the right way to go".

One participant (the manager) did understand company A's perspective and reason for deciding to take the approach of a service managed by another company:

P4:"I could see that company A wanted to work with a company that had experience and intelligence in this area".

One of the most consistent themes to come out of this data analysis was the extent to which all of the participants grew to believe that this change was good for them personally as they progressed through this transition program (valence). For some the transition program was a way to remove themselves from a difficult situation in company A, for others they supported it because they identified from the beginning of the program that it there would be personal professional benefits. P1 commented that as she felt restricted in her current role, moving to company B might be a way to resolve that situation commenting that "*I supported the change, not for the company, but for myself"*.

Self and Schraeder (2009) expand on the personal valence topic, suggesting that, not only does perceived benefits influence an employee's support of the change, but how attractive they see those benefits as being. This was a factor for P3, as she commented *"we're going into a much more global larger environment, and that must be able to give us better opportunities".* Armenakis *et al.* (2002) discuss the importance of efficacy and that individuals must have the confidence to move towards the new way of working. There was some evidence on the belief that the transition program could be done well. P1, who did not think the change was appropriate for company A, did say that *"there wasn't any doubt in my mind that it would be done…and done well".* She felt it was the reputation of company B that made her believe this. Evidence of the lack of personal efficacy was apparent from P2. She described that although she believed the change was good for her, she didn't believe she could convince others to support the change, because she was not long in the company.

Establishing principal support for a change is essential and when this support is evident to employees going through a change program, it can help move a change program towards institutionalisation (Armenakis *et al.* 2002). As outlined earlier, the establishment of a team of change champions ensured that principal support was evident within the teams. Support of the transition program was evident from P1 when she explained:

P1: "During team meetings I tried to convince others that it may not be the worst thing to move over to company B, that there would be opportunity in company B that would not be available to us in company A."

Additionally, other evidence showed that the communications did grow their support for change as the program progressed. P3 discussed how talking with representatives of the new company helped her understand better the potential job roles in company B, and that by service commencement date, she was happy to become an employee of company B. She commented *"these one to one meetings and the team discussions helped me understand more how I would fit into company B."*

Analysis of the data shows the importance of these five components in the change efforts that an organisation can undertake. What is also clear is that when one component is present, it can result help the development of one of the other essential components, in turn improving the chances of success of a change program. In this instance, because P1 strongly believed that this change was in her best long term interest (personal valence) it led her to encourage her fellow team members to support the transition program (principal support).

Communication of the Business reasons for transition program

Armenakis *et al*. (1993) suggest the reasons for change should be consistent with applicable contextual factors such as legal changes or competitive environment changes. When interviewed, the program lead from company A explained that although cost reduction was one of the aims, there were more strategic reasons behind the decision to outsource the technology department. Company A decided to outsource to enable them to increase their capabilities to exploit the opportunities and deal with the threats in the telecommunications industry. Mobile as a platform for companies to sell their products was beginning to flourish and company A was well positioned in the market to seize the opportunity, but they had to build their capability, and partnering with company B was a way of achieving that. Interestingly, when questions on their understanding of the business reasons for the change, all participants except the manager interviewed, cited cost as the main driver for change.

P2: "As I understood it the reasons were purely to reduce cost."
P3: "Cost, at the end of the day."

P4 (the manager), understood that the business reasons were more complex that just reducing costs saying that *"I understood the strategic reasons for the move".*

Evidence of resistance to the proposed change

The evidence gathered shows that there was resistance among the employees group to the changes proposed by company A, from the beginning of the transition program. Participants in this research all resisted the change initially and observed resistance through actions that were taken by their peers, in particular in the time before service commencement date. Resistance manifested itself in actions taken by the group of employees that were in scope to move to company B. An employee forum was setup to enable employees meet to discuss their concerns on the transition program. Company A paid for an independent advisor for the employee forum, and the forum held regular meetings with management from both company A and company B. Some employees did not want to use the employee forum, but opted to join the union affiliated to their industry. During the six months of transition, before the service commencement date, employees fed back their issues with the transition program through both of these communication routes. Some of the comments from the interview participants on resistance observed:

P1: "In my opinion the majority of employees were very resistant."
P4: "There was arguing among different people – some decided to join the union for this industry, others looked to the employee forum that was setup to help employees understand their benefits. But ultimately it was all to the same end – to fight for better benefits and rights. They were even talking at the start of the process about strikes and walk-outs, but that didn't materialise"
P2: "Some of them did not want to move to company B, some were very sceptical from the start…in my team people really felt their jobs were being taken away from them. Some decided to resign from company A."

As highlighted earlier, Ford and Ford (2009) discussed the importance of seeing resistance as feedback rather than disagreement with the proposed change. Three of the participants highlighted that they observed employees resisting because there was a real concern about how their skills would fit within company B.

P1: "I do remember some people being worried about what jobs they would do in company B, how their skills would work in the new company."
P3: "Yes there were a number of people where there were concerned about the skill fit – because we had very specific skills, we weren't sure how they mapped into the new organisation."

From the data analysed, it is evident that company B recognised this as a concern and setup an event to show the employees being transferred, the career opportunities available to them in different departments within company B.

P4 who was a manager in company acknowledged that he recognised that a lot of the people who were resisting had been there since the company began, and essentially grew up together professionally saying *"there was a great culture in company A and all of a sudden the company you were loyal to, decides to outsource you*". Two of the participants in this research were with company A for nearly 10 years. Both participants expressed their initial feelings on hearing about the planned transition program:

P1: "There were no employee consultations on what could be the potential alternatives."
P3: "They didn't consider the amount of knowledge they would lose by going to a managed service."

For both of these participants, their immediate reaction was resistance on hearing of the planned change.

Evidence of readiness for the proposed change

The evidence suggests that there was widespread resistance to this proposed change when it was announced, and that through the transition program activities resistance was managed, with the data showing that in some cases, that this resulted in readiness for the planned change. Hammond *et al.* (2011) emphasise that incorporating the concerns of employees into the communications will influence their support of the change. This was true of P3 who stated that the communications from company B after transition started, and before service commencement date, increased her support of the transition program. When examining the evidence, the research found that the hiring of an employee advisor and the regular communications from company A and B, positively impacted the employee group's support for the transition. The aim of providing the employee advisor was to help the employees understand better what their entitlements and rights were during this change process, and to give them a forum for communicating their issues back to the management of company A. P4 recalled *"we raised concerns from discussions with the advisor, we would meet company A executives and HR people, and representatives from company B to resolve those issues. I remember it working quite well."* This participant also confirmed that additional benefits were achieved for transitioning employees as a result of these discussions.

When speaking to the interviewees they all accepted the changes but at various stages through this change process. Those who accepted the change earlier in the process, did so because they believed this change was going to happen, irrespective of whether they felt it was right or wrong:

P3: "I didn't really accept things until we were well into discussions with company B."
P2: "I didn't believe I could stop this change happening, so I had to accept it."

Interestingly, both team members interviewed, who believed the change would happen with our without their support, also strongly believed from the start that this change would be personally beneficial to their career, and it was that belief that sustained them through the transition program.

The researcher reviewed the supplementary information provided before interviewing the participants, and this included a communications plan which had a structured approach for the year preceding the service commencement with company B. The plan activities included one to one meetings, manager's forums, employee forums, lunch and learns, workshop and broadcast communications. When questioning the participants on preparing for the change, they all discussed the communications they experienced as factor in reducing resistance to the transition program. Their comments included:

P1: "I believe that the success of the change project was due to the communications and activities carried out by company B in particular."
P2: "The information I received pushed me to support it rather than resist it."
P3: "Through the communications and networking with people from the new company I realised that this change was good and there would be opportunity in the new company for me."

This evidence backs up the Armenakis *et al.* (2000) argument that persuasive communications can help affect the perceptions of the planned change which can in turn strengthen support for the change.

For some employees transferring into company B, having gone through the transition program, they still demonstrated a high level of resistance. The HR manager for company B explained to the researcher that after service commencement date, there were still some difficulties. New ways of working were established and the newly transferred employees had to establish new working relationships with people who were once their working colleagues in company A. Some of these newly transferred employees could not adapt to the new way of working, with some eventually resigning from company B in the months after their transfer in.

Discussion on Findings

The purpose this research was to explore the employees understanding of the three phases of change and how the message for change can influence readiness for and resistance to change, through the change phases. The findings are now discussed in the context of the research question.

To explore employees understanding of the phases of change

Based on the findings of this research, the participants, who were part of the group of employees selected to move from company A into company B had a clear understanding of the different phases of the transition program. The transition program was a planned change that had three phases, with movement into each phase marked by a date to which both company A and B had agreed to in a signed legal contract. Movement from phase one to the second (transition) phase was marked by the transition date in the plan with move to the final phase (service commencement) marked by the service commencement date. This simple structure meant employees could quickly understand the plan and key milestones at a high level.

Understanding of the change phases was further helped by the activities during each phase. In the unfreezing stage, company A worked with many companies before agreeing to award a contract to company B. Once the transition phase commenced, the only companies involved were company A and company B and work began on preparing the business process and the employee groups in company A for the change. On moving to the service commencement phase, the selected group of employees became employees of company B and they physically moved their work location to a dedicated floor within company A. The service commencement event that marked the move into the final phase of the change aligns with the Armenakis *et al.*

(2000) view that rites and ceremonies can be a way to adopt and confirm the new organisational change while acknowledging the move into this phase can be difficult. This research showed that this last phase proved most difficult for the group of employees that moved in that company A went from being their employer to their client at the start of service commencement. The HR manager from company B noted that there were a small number of resignations from the transferred group, during the service commencement phase, as people struggled to adapt.

To explore their experience of the communications in the context of the components of the change message

The change message effectively represents all of the information employees receive from the activities that are undertaken as part of a change program, with these activities giving consideration for the five key components of discrepancy, appropriateness, valence, efficacy and principal support.
The five different components were identified through the communication activities that were undertaken in this transition program, through examination of the documentation provided to the researcher, and from the data gathered from the participant interviews. It was evident from the program plan and the communications strategy that plans were in place to ensure employees understood the reasons and the need for this change (discrepancy, appropriateness). Activities such as the company B roadshow aimed to build the belief that the move would benefit the group transferring into company B (valence). Including the change champions as part of the wider change team went some way to convincing the employee group that this change could be completed (efficacy) and that there were clear reasons to support the program (principal support). All participants agreed that the communications felt adequate and that there was a considerable amount of discussions had and information available to them during the transition

program. The experiences of the participants through the transition program, sheds light on whether a comprehensive change message reached them, as originally planned by company A.

From this research it was evident that support for the change varied by employee and varied at different points through the transition program. The data analysis revealed that for each participant, some of the change message components featured much stronger than others and that this component compensated to some degree for their beliefs in relation to the other components.   In the case of P1, her belief that this planned change was good for her in the long term (valence) and her confidence in company B to effectively manage their part of the transition program (efficacy) completely overrode her strong belief that the change being planned was not wrong for the business (discrepancy and appropriateness).   Two of the remaining participants also identified personal opportunities as the reason for their support of the program. Armenakis *et al.* (2000) contends that each of the five components are essential to move towards institutionalisation of a change. It is evident for this case study, however, that the strength of some of the components can offset other components that the participants felt were weak or totally absent.

To explore if this experience impacted their resistance to and readiness for the change that was planned

A range of themes and sub-themes emerged from the analysis of this case study which highlighted the aspects of the transition program activities that brought the employees from resistance towards readiness for the new way of working. Opportunity, Involvement in the program featured strongly in convincing people to support the change, while knowledge of business reasons for the change and leadership attitudes did delay readiness somewhat.

The data analysis showed that participants reached the points of readiness at different times during the transition program, with personal opportunities identified factoring highly in terms of influencing their support of the program.

Table 4: Participants move from resistance to readiness during the Transition Program.

Transition Program Change Phases	Participants support of Transition Program			
	1	2	3	4
Unfreeze: Assessing managed service options	N → Y	N → Y	N	N
Change: Preparation to transition to Managed Service	Y	Y	N → Y	N → Y
Refreeze: Service Commencement	Y	Y	Y	Y

For some participants, their readiness for change happened early on during the transition program, with the recognition that moving to a new employer (company B) provided personal career opportunities. For others they were convinced later in the process, with involvement in the transition activities playing a part in convincing them to change their views. Table 4 outlines the point at which each of the participants of this research, supported the transition program. Interestingly, although P1 and P2 supported the change early on because they identified opportunity for them in the process, they remained convinced at the end of the process that the outsourcing of the technology department was still the wrong course of action for company. This supports the argument of Self and Schraeder (2009) that even if management clearly demonstrate the need for a particular change, people will remain focused on how the change will impact them as individuals. For P3 and P4, their support for the transition program only happened towards the end of the transition phase. This aligns with the literature that active participation in change activities can build support for a change (Armenakis *et al.* 2002). P3 came to the conclusion, just before the transition phase ended, that this change would be advantageous for them personally. For the P4 (manager) it was a combination of understanding the strategic reasons and identifying career opportunities in company B, that moved him to support the transition program. In this case study personal valence moved participants through resistance to readiness during this transition program. Additional evidence from the HR manager in company B highlighted that a number of people who transferred from company A, later resigned within the first three months of after service commencement, highlighting the fact that resistance remained throughout all phases of this transition program.

This research also demonstrates the importance of viewing resistance as feedback on a proposed change rather being viewed as opposition to a proposed change. Each of the participants discussed the different reactions that their fellow team members had on hearing about the proposed transition program, with two key reactions noted by the researcher. The worry about how the skills of the group of employees moving from company A to company B and their concern about securing and retaining entitlements and benefits with the move were two topics that concerned employees shortly after the company B was announced as the new managed service provider. All participants believed these two points were valid concerns and the evidence shows that company A and company B took actions to address resistance that had some influence.
Jacobsen (2008) explains that there may be resistance if middle managers do not get involved in a change program. It was evident from the data that some managers did not support the change, and this lack of support for the

program, seems to have delayed support for this program among the transferring group of employees. P1, who supported the program from the first phase felt she received adequate information from her manager, whereas P3, who had a different manager, spoke strongly about her manager's lack of engagement in the process, and her support for the program only increased after her participation in the transition program activities. Three non-management participants also revealed that they were not aware of the strategic business reasons for this transition program, so in a sense did not have the full picture on the reasons for this move to a managed service.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings from the case study research, and linked those findings back to the literature on the topics of the change process, and resistance to and readiness for change. Lewin's three phase model and the Armenakis *et al.* (2000) change readiness model were used as a theoretical framework through this research. Analysis of the case study data showed that company A planned and went through a significant change with phases that aligned to the three step model for planned change. Interviews took place with the participants from different teams and levels within the company A organisation and with two managers (from company A and company B) who were involved in the transition program on a daily basis. Through understanding of their experiences the researcher assessed their resistance to the change through the transition program and when that resistance moved towards readiness. It was evident that the different components that Armenakis *et al.* (2000) argue as essential elements of change program activities, featured in the overall transition plans. The analysis of the case study data showed that for some individuals, all of these components were not present, some for the complete duration of the program. What the research did highlight, however, is that the strong presence of one of these components, can sustain an individual through a change program, despite the other elements being absent for that individual. Recognising that some components can have greater weighting in terms of building readiness for change can inform plans as organisations work through change programs. In addition, resistance to change, if seen as feedback to the process being undertaken, once addressed, can be used to build further support for the change and improve the changes for institutionalisation in the longer term.

Conclusions

Conclusion

The aim of this research paper was to explore how the change message that organisation members receive during the different phases of a change program, influences resistance to change and readiness for change. Many would agree with Rosabeth Moss Kanters suggestion that "change is hard work" (Webber 2002, p15) and embarking on a change program requires the commitment and participation of all organisational members.

It is evident from this research that the information employees receive and the change activities that employees engage in during a change program, impact their thoughts on and support of the change being implemented. The message that organisation members receive when going through a change program is critical to building support and effectively managing the resistance that occurs during a typical change program. The essential elements of discrepancy, appropriateness, valence, efficacy and principal support all must be considered when planning change program communications and activities, and were also demonstrated to be important factors in this case study. This research has added to the existing body of literature by identifying the importance of these component and has highlighted, for this case study, that some of the components were pivotal in establishing readiness for the change that was planned.

Limitations of this research

Yin (2014) suggests that some researchers find the use of the case study method as a less desirable form of research in that it can be less rigorous, in that there is an inability to generalise from the research and that sometimes the level of effort required is immense for what is produced. Qualitative research does not lend itself to generalisation, however it is appropriate to use this research approach to enable the researcher to probe and gain deeper insight into an area. This research can then be further elaborated with research of a quantitative nature. While case studies are qualitative in nature, they also come with their limitations in that findings cannot be generalised to other settings, nonetheless, it does provide valuable insights on a selected topic.

Out of the twelve people contacted for interviews, as part of the gathering of primary data, only four people responded. This resulted in a smaller sample of the population from which the researcher could extract data. The researcher understands and accepts that the sample of the population used for this research was limited and with the qualitative nature of this exploratory case study, the extent to which the researcher can generalise from the findings of this research is also limited. However, findings from even a small study of this nature have been comparable to previously published research.

Recommendations for further research

Further quantitative research into a higher number of case studies is recommended to examine the balance of the message components, relative to each other, and how these message components influence each other to build support or resistance, in a change program. Further research could provide additional insights to enable organisations fine tune their plans for change as they work through a change program with their employees.

Appendix A – Interview Guide

Questions were developed using the theoretical framework as a guide. Each question is coded to indicate its link to the theoretical framework of this research.

<u>Lewin's Three Step Model for change:</u>

CP: Change Phase.

<u>Armenakis *et al*. (2000) Change Readiness Model:</u>

D: Discrepancy; A: Appropriateness; PS: Principal Support; E: Efficacy; PV: Personal Valence; All – all 5 elements.

Introduction	What was your role & level within the organisation?
	How long were you in the company at the time?
	Did you have any role on the transition program?
CP	When did you become aware of the transition program?
CP	The transition program plan was aligned to the dates agreed between company A and company B in terms of when the transition started and when service commenced. What did you understand of the different phases of the transition program?
D,A	Communication is key in a change project. How do you feel that the communication was handled during this transition program?
D,A	Did you feel your first line manager kept you informed?
D,A,PS	Through what channels did you receive communications on the transition?
All	Where these channels/methods effective?
All	What the timing of the transition communications right?
PS, PV	Did any of the transition program members spend one to one time explaining the change/transition with you?
D,A	Did you understand why your company was making this change?

D,A	Did you think that this change was necessary - that it had to be done at this particular time?
A	Did you feel the managed service provider route was the right change to make?
	If yes, how did you know this?
	If no, what made you think this?
PS	Who do you feel were the main supporters of this change, did you feel the leadership fully supported this change?
PS	Did you recognise if any of your non-management colleagues supported the change enthusiastically?
D,A, PS	Did you support this transition program?
D,A	Did you resist this transition program?
E	At the start of this program, did you believe that this change could be done?
E	What in your opinion were the barriers to this change
PS	At what stage did you feel these barriers were overcome?
D,A	Did you encounter any resistance?
D,A, PS	Did you observe resistance being managed by members of the transition team?
PS	Did you take any opportunities to discuss or advise your peers to support or resist the change?
PS	Did any of your peers convince you this change should be supported?
PV	Did you believe that you would gain career wise from this move to Managed Service Provider?
PV	What did you identify that was positive for you personally, as a result of this transition? (apart from career).
PS	At what point did the communications on the transition cease?
	Is there anything else you'd like to add in terms of the process you went through, and how the communication & message for change was handled?
	Thank you.

Appendix B – Interview Transcript

Any comments that would identify any companies or people have been removed.

Q: Thank you for meeting with me today. As part of my BA(Hons) in Human Resource Management, I am carrying out research in the area of Change Management and Communication using a case study, and looking in particular at the phases of change and the communication of the change message to the team, in preparation for transition. The overall objective is to examine the understanding of the change phases, how the use of the change message influences readiness for and resistance to change. Your answers will be completely confidential and the data gathered will only be used with your permission. No referencing of your name will be used. The interview will be recorded and transcribed with your permission. You are free to stop this process at any stage and withdraw your participation from the research. Are you happy to continue?

A: Yes, I am.

Q: What was your role & level within the organisation?	A: I would have been one of the senior members of the team, just below management. When the manager was on holidays I would have stepped in….but I wouldn't have had a managerial role or title.
Q: How long were you in the company at the time?	A: Coming up to ten years.

Q: Did you have any role on the transition program?

A: I did in terms of processes, so I would have worked with the transition team and actually merged into the transition and transformation team in terms of the managed service cutover.

Q: So you were part of the team of the examined the readiness of the processes in preparation for the cutover. So were you involved in terms of that readiness….were you part of any communications for that readiness

A: I had to attend a lot of the meetings…so I was involved in planning the changes for the business processes…so I had the chance to go to a number of meetings to discuss the changes planned…..I felt I contributed to the decisions being made.

Q: Did it cover readiness for the process, or did it cover anything else, all of the activities that for that business area.

A: It would have covered activities in the plan that was in place for the year…because we cut over in mid-year…but we would have already had a plan following through for the business….so obviously moving into company B we had to continue that plan for the year

Q: So there was a business plan in place for the year, so you had to show how that business plan would keep going even with that change over

A: Exactly yeah that it wasn't going to change just because the team members had changed company. So you were presenting to the transformation team on the continuation.

Q: When did you become aware of the transition program?	A: I had heard some talk within the company before it was officially announced.
Q: The transition program plan was aligned to the dates agreed between company A and company B in terms of when the transition started and when the service commenced. What did you understand of these different phases of the program?	A: After the decision was made I was told by my manager when the transition date was. I knew the service commencement date was very clearly the point at which we moved into the new way of working. On that date the new practices were adopted and we all had to follow Company B processes before we were allowed to any work for Company A. The last part was probably the most difficult.
Q: Communication is key in a change project. How do you feel that the communication was handled during this transition program?	A: I felt it was quite good, everybody was involved and informed. Don’t remember it being bad.
Q: Did you feel your first line manager kept you informed?	A: He had no interest in it at all…he took a step back from the moment it was announced… his role was changing in the new organisation and I think that what he focused on rather than his responsibility as a first line manager.

Q: Did that attitude make an impression on you…did it impact your thoughts on how this transition was going to go…how did you feel?

A: Eventually it made me more look forward more to moving…so it was just frustrating.

Q: Through what channels did you receive communications on the transition: one to ones, emails, and meetings?

A: We had a lot of meetings, so there were, can't remember if there were monthly or more frequently coming up to it. We also had representation for employees that were moving, and one of my team colleagues would have been on that team, so we got regular communications from the new head of the account in the new organisation. So the communications were fairly good, and then we had transition and communication managers on site who were regularly available for questions. So it was good.

Q: So you had access to somebody when you had questions?

A: Loads….there was no issue….if you wanted to get information you could get it very easily.

Q: Where these channels/methods effective?

A: Yes I think they were

Q: What the timing of the transition communications right?

A: Yes….and what they did say was 'you know these are stuff to happen' and it did happen when they are discussed and agreed….so we knew quite quickly what the plan was…all of the information would never have been available at the time you're producing a plan because you need to progress through and understand all of the process changes and you need to understand all the people and what their skills are…so there was a huge information gathering exercise that had to happen….as you went through the transition….and from what I remember we kept to plan pretty much….I don't remember there being any great blockers.

Q: Did any of the transition members spend one to one time explaining the change/transition with you?

A: Yes, we did definitely.

Q: Did that help?

A: Yes.

Q: Did they answer all your queries, did you get satisfactory answers?

A: Yes, it was a case of 'if there are any issues I'm here, just give me a shout.'

Q: Did you understand why your company was making this change?

A: Yes. Cost, at the end of the day…to the company…you know…reducing cost and getting stuff quicker to market.

Q: Any mention of other impact for people moving over?	A: They didn’t consider the amount of knowledge they would lose by going to a managed service ….the organisation I was in, we built from scratch …they believed they could cope without the knowledge.
Q: Did you think that this change was necessary - that it had to be done at this particular time?	A: No, I didn’t feel it was necessary.
Q: Did you feel the managed service provider route was the right change to make?	A: No….It was the new…in thing to do…in terms of business….let’s outsource, let’s off shore.
Q: If yes, how did you know this?	n/a
Q: If no, what made you think this?	A: I think they jumped on the bandwagon….being in the organisation from pretty much from launch…I think they took the easy option out, as opposed to looking internally and making it more effective and efficient… I know now the change was better in the long run, but at time I didn’t’ want it.

Q: Who do you feel were the main supporters of this change, did you feel the leadership fully supported this change?	A: It was Leadership….totally.
Q: Did you recognise if any of your non-management colleagues supported the change enthusiastically?	A: I don't think anyone was fully 'lets go, I can't wait to get out of here'….but people were looking at the bigger picture and thinking we're going into a much more global larger environment, and that must be able to give us better opportunities….so there was some recognition.
Q: Did you support this transition program?	A: Not at first.
Q: Did you resist this transition program?	A: I never resisted it…I didn't look for it to happen….we weren't involved, the decision was made and we were informed….and that was it…it was happening. So I never resisted….but I never wanted to move.
Q: You didn't support it from the moment it was announced….	A: No…but at the time the move came, and how things had changed during the transition from the old company…I as quite happy. And it was more about how my old company managed it…which is

hard….because I don't think the company that is outsourcing ever considered how they communicate to their employees…they're expecting the other company to do that.

Q: At the start of the transition program, did you believe that this change could be done?

A: It didn't matter what I thought, it was happening anyway.

Q: What in your opinion were the barriers to this change?

A: The lack of communications from company A didn't help. Though the communications from company B were ok so, in the end it wasn't really a barrier.

Q: What was it about company B's communications that helped?

A: We received invites from the new company to talk about roles in the company, how the company worked, communications in terms of benefits (health insurance, holidays, working arrangements flexibility) – all of those things that you don't think about, discuss them with you, you realise that's ok that's good. These one to one meetings and the team discussions helped me understand more how I would fit into company B.

Q: So it ended up being the new company that changed your

A: Completely.

mind.

Q: At what stage did you feel these barriers were overcome?	A: Personally for me it was as I as working on the project and with company B's communications. I didn't really accept things until we were well into discussions with company B.
Q: Did you encounter any resistance?	A: Yes I did. Yes there were a number of people where there were concerned about the skill fit – because we had very specific skills, we weren't sure how they mapped into the new organisation. And a number of people were mismatched when they came into the new organisation.
Q: Did you observe resistance being managed by members of the transition/change team?	Yes I did. I fed back into the process on the skills issue, to help understanding and put people in the right place in the new organisation…that they could go into a role that would develop their skills.
Q: Did you take any opportunities to discuss or advise your peers to support or resist the change?	A: Just the feeding back to the new organisation management on the roles
Q: Did any of your peers convince you this change should	A: Yes, it's hard to remember there were so many discussions. It was happening

be supported?	whether we liked or not….it wasn't a case of being convinced, but being educated on the specifics that were relevant to us, do you know what I mean?
Q: Did you believe that you would gain career wise from this move to company B?	A: Yes absolutely.
Q: Did you understand what was in it for you?	A: Yes.
Q: How did you know this?	A: Through the communications and networking with people from the new company I realised that this change was good and there would be opportunity in the new company for me.
Q: So understanding better where you were going?	A: Yes.
Q: What did you identify that was positive for you personally, as a result of this transition?	A: Yes, understanding those projects that I could work on.
Q: At what point did the communications on the transition cease?	A: Pretty much straight away…like I think the day of changeover. But we had lots of meetings so I suppose there was still plenty of talking and working through

issues.

Q: How long did you feel you had support as you moved into the managed service phase of the change?

A: Oh, another month or two at least. But you know the structure that was put in place…because we all remained on site in company A, in the managed service role. So the structure of the managed services was setup, and we moved directly into that. There was support for people management, resourcing, function management and stuff.

Q: Overall, do you have anything else to add? The focus of this research is how you move people through a change process and convince them to support it. So in terms of that, is there any else you can think about around the communications?

A: I don't know what the best practice is for an organisation that is outsourcing their staff how to communicate…I don't whether they knew about that, or followed it, or some areas followed it…it definitely wasn't followed in my area….do you know what I mean? I don't know whether company B had learned from previous projects and learned from that and subsequently when they've done it again, they've learned from it so I wouldn't have any complaints from their side. I think companies that are outsourcing a department they need to consider a bit more about communicating to staff that have given years of service to them, you know?

I don’t have any more questions. Thanks very much for agreeing to do the interview.	A: No problem.

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