



Managements influence in implementing new  
software applications in an Irish firm and  
employee acceptance to change management.

**By Kevin Masterson**

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## **Abstract**

**Purpose** – This dissertation proposes there is a lack of literature identifying specific change management roles in actively influencing change. Change management initiatives are often set by executives in organisations and middle management bear the brunt in implementing them at team and employee level. While change has been researched thoroughly, there are gaps in the academic literature in identifying practices as to how active managers influence soft skills in behavioural changes. The objective of this dissertation is to 1) identify aspects of management which promote the speed of employee acceptance towards change 2) identify managements perceptions in dealing with change 3) identify a set of practices or tools used to overcome barriers in change management 4) provide a set of recommendations based on management practices to influence the soft aspects of change management.

**Design/methodology/approach** - This study used a phenomenological philosophy in its findings. A deductive approach was used to provide further academic literature in support of existing change management frameworks. The research performed a case study of middle management in an Irish organisation undergoing a major technical change which affected more than 2000 employees using a choice of mono method qualitative data collection. The researcher performed a thematic analysis of the data collected which focused on managements influence on employee and team acceptance to change in a business unit of that organisation. Given time constraints in the dissertation a cross sectional time horizon was used in this case study to collect data during the implementation of change project in the organisation.

**Findings** – The findings revealed a set of practices management used to meet the objectives as outlined. These include a self-analysis towards implementing change, practices in dealing with resistance to change, empowering employee involvement in decision making, uncovering hidden agendas and black swan events. It proposes the use of a set of tools which complement change management frameworks.

**Keywords** – Change management, middle management, resistance to change, change agents, communication

**Paper type** – Dissertation

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# 1 Chapter 1: Overview

## 1.1 Introduction

Change management as a discipline has been evolving over the last couple of decades as the subject has become a commercialised information source for management professionals. Organisations have been founded to meet the growing demands of professional needs and certification of competencies provided by Prosci (2019) founded in 1994 and The Change Management Institute which was founded in 2005 in Sydney (Change Management Institute, 2019). Countless journal articles and books have been written on the subject, yet leading researchers continue to report there are a high percentage of change failure rates up to 70% which is an astonishing figure in a climate where small margins can cost a business its life line (Kotter, 1995).

What is the issue?

The importance of change management is in relation to soft skills. Middle management tend to bear the brunt of implementing change initiatives which are often set out by executives in organisations. While change management literature veers towards the theories which guide change as a process, it does not tend to provide any guidance towards specific change management roles (Crawford, 2010). Its near neighbour, and often competitor, project management on the other hand sets out roles in applying change which is more quantifiable in evaluating a project as a medium.

This study is an exploratory study and descriptive in nature which will explore some of the issues in how non-executive management influence change as a practice in an Irish firm.

## 1.2 Justification for research

One could argue sufficient research has been done in the area of change management, but more in-depth studies are required in Irish organisations to add to the literature of non-executive influence in managing change projects. This dissertation will explore this concept directly with managers who have

been set this task. As outlined, there is some distance between the change management literature and the application of the change initiatives in practice. There is a need to understand how management assess the soft skills which influence behaviour, create systems of communication, and how they estimate their own effectiveness in implementing change programs. In doing so, the study will provide a clearer calculation on the requirements of future managers to influence change effectively and be successful in managing teams.

Furthermore, as consultancy management has become a commercialised business with experienced consultants sourced to oversee projects for organisations, there is a conceptualised movement within the organisation in this case study to bring the experience back into the firm. This is due to the cost of outsourcing consultants to run projects in an industry which is chasing development and expects future change to turn in rapid succession. Hence it is a cost-effective measure to upskill management who can manage future change initiatives effectively.

### 1.3 Research aims and objectives

The fundamental aim of this research is to identify management practices which actively influence change initiatives among their teams and individual employees. This will be a supplementary literature to the change management frameworks outlined by the likes of Lewin (1951), Schein (1996) and (Kotter, 1995) as they provide high level change management guides.

The second objective is to record some managerial practices for influencing change behaviour which can be replicated for future change managers.

A study in terms of assessing change phenomena by Nixon (2014) who's focus was on the employee's perception of managements effectiveness in implementing change formed common themes which this study will attempt to reveal any potential differences or common features from a manager's point of view.

The purpose of the present dissertation is to focus on a case study of an Irish firm which is undergoing its biggest technical change in over a decade which will affect over 2000 employees in the organisation. The research will focus on

a business unit within that organisation in order to provide a detailed assessment of how middle management influence their teams and the impact they have on change. This research will unveil some of those influencing factors which the academic literature needs to build on.

Therefore, how managers in an Irish organisation use change management as a tool to fulfil change initiatives and seek answers towards bridging the gap between theory and application of change practices.

The objectives set in this paper provide a starting point for research:

- To identify aspects of management which promote the speed of employee acceptance towards change
- To identify managements perceptions in dealing with change
- To identify a set of practices or tools used to overcome barriers in employee acceptance to change management
- To provide a set of recommendations based on management practices to influence the soft aspects of change management

#### 1.4 Research question

How management influences change initiatives in implementing a new software application in an Irish firm and employee's acceptance to change management.

This dissertation will look at the practice's management use as tools in order to influence change. It will expose issues which arise in change initiatives and discover the work arounds to overcome issues and hit milestones set out by executive management.

#### 1.5 Scope and limitations

The dissertation will mainly focus on unearthing the common issues that arise in change projects in respect of the soft skills which influence employee acceptance to change. The study intends to provide an understanding as how to react when faced with common behavioural issues. The study will not include technical elements of implementing software applications.

## 1.6 Dissertation structure

To present this research findings and results in an easy to follow format, the study will be organised as follows. Chapter two will detail the present literature in change management, detailing original change management frameworks, supplementary behavioural literature which relate to the soft aspects of change. Studies reviewed in the academic literature will be referenced according to their relevance supporting the research in this study. Chapter three will detail the applied research methodology according to researcher's philosophy, approach to obtaining data in the findings section, the time horizon of the study used. Chapter four will review the findings of the data collected based on the aforementioned practises outlined in chapter three. Finally, in chapter five we will discuss how the findings are interpreted and provide insight into the data collected towards developing the academic literature.

## 2 Chapter 2: Academic Review

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012, p. 70) describe the academic literature as demonstrating the researcher's awareness to the current subject matter. Demonstrating in detail current knowledge of the subject area, building on foundations of the subject and highlighting recent studies to discuss the subject evolution. Some subjects are decades old and others are new. It is important to visualise the subject matter in the wider context, it is not stuck in a vacuum (Jankowicz, 2005). The review provides the reader with theory for the forthcoming research, and overview of what researchers have discussed previously. Inevitably this academic review will provide the foundation for judging the content of the research provided here (Denyer and Tranfield, 2009).

### 2.1 Introduction:

Technology-driven change is a complex business requirement in modern management. If organisations do not invest in technology change management activities they risk falling behind and losing competitive advantage by wasting resources if they are not up to the speed of the industry (Todnem, 2005). In contrast from a resources perspective, Bruch and Menges (2010) heed caution towards making too many changes in an organisation at

once. Suggesting it is essential to maintain enough stability in the organisation to keep change momentum moving in necessary projects, but avoid wasting resources when too much change is disruptive to the organisation.

Beer and Nitin (2000) stated an overwhelming 70 percent of change implementations result in failure. This figure has been presented as factual evidence by high profile authors including Keller and Aiken (2008) who partners with McKinsey & Company (2019), Hammer and Champy (2001), and Kotter (2008) who publishes management literature and also has his own management consultancy firm (Kotter, 2019). Although, this quantitative measurement of 70 percent has been critiqued and somewhat disproven by Hughes (2011, p 460) citing that the main academic literature which gave reference to this percentile severely lacked discussion of methodologies and reference to the empirical evidence which formed such a rounded number. Rather Hughes (2011) has determined that it may have arisen from articles and change management practitioners assuming the statistic has lived long enough to be true. Nevertheless, change project failures still occur regardless of dubious statistics. Hence finding equilibrium between two aspects of development and stability, as a security, is the challenge faced by management.

The implementation of information technology (IT) has long associated with change management procedures (Carr, 2014). Organisations seek advances in technology to allow workflow completion or analysis tools to be much effective allowing organisations to free up resources to use elsewhere in their organisational strategy. Unforeseen side effects of IT implementation however can cause tremendous pain for organisations and in some instances require adaptability in finding solution's which do not fit into the vision of the organisation's project framework (Bartoli and Hermel, 2004). Issues raised in the literature highlight how difficulties in implementing software changes disrupt how employees handle their workflow as they experience problems around adjusting to a new process (Eason, 1989).

Change management frameworks highlight the 'softer' aspects of project implementation such as Lewin's (1947) model of change or Kotter's (1995) 8

step model of why transformation efforts fail. They focus on the how and why in relation to people management and being effective during the stage so change implementation and what that involves. Hence from a change management perspective, identifying what influences affect transformational change is necessary to avoid being in the feared 70 percent of failed change projects.

## 2.2 Change management origins

According to Burnes (2004) change in organisations is becoming an ever-present feature of life in the work. This is due to speed of technological development and an evolving acceptance of required changes in work practice accompanied by growing general knowledge and skill set of the modern workforce. There is a need to adapt to technology advances, and to have a greater acceptance of modifying work practices in line with technology advances. Change management draws content from practical subjects enough so that Pollack (2016) argues the subject should be merged with project management. Contrastingly, the subject has significant features in common with social psychology as comes from the foundation theory by Lewin (1947) model of change and growth in the fields of behavioural change. Lewin's model is a different type of management to project management, in focusing on the human response to change (Elrod and Tippett, 2002).

Since Lewin's initial three phase model theory, unfreeze behaviour – change – refreeze the new behaviour, was introduced it has been developed at various intersections which led to later researchers developing new frameworks as the discipline of change management began to grow. However, despite Lewin's initial corner stone theory of change management, his theoretical framework succumbs to criticism in that the model is focused on small study samples and neglected that organisations are in constant flux of change due to internal and external factors. From this critique the 'emergent approach' was developed which identifies change as a process of learning in response to those internal and external factors not accounted for by Lewin (Todnem, 2005). Todnem further suggests the concept that change management geared towards

'change readiness and facilitating for change' than executing a pre-planned measurable project.

The subject is developed via the emergent approach method with a number of models including more steps, but the themes of transition begin to clarify throughout when compared. Using theories of Kotter (1995) 8 step model, Kanter's 10 commandments (Kanter et. al 1992) or Luecke's 7 step model (Luecke, 2003). The below table extracted from Todnem's Change Management review (2005) compares where these three models and the emergent approaches align.

Table 1 - A comparison of three models of emergent change, Todnem (2005)

<b>Kanters 10 Commandments</b>	<b>Kotters 8 Step Model</b>	<b>Luecke 7 steps for change</b>
Analyze the organization and its need for change		Mobilize energy and commitment through joint identification
Create a shared vision and a common direction	Create a vision for change	Develop a shard vision
Separate from the past		
Create a sense of urgency	Create a sense of urgency	
Support a strong leader role		Identify the leadership
Line up political sponsorship	Create a guiding coalition	
Craft an implementation plan		Communicate the change vision
Develop enabling structures	Empoering broad-based action	
Communicate, involve people and be honest	Communicate the vision	
Reinforce and institutional change	Anchor the changes	
	Create short terms wins	
	Consolidiate improvements	
		Focus on results, not activities
		Institutionalise success through formal policies, systems and structures
		Monitor and adjust strategies in response to problems
<i>Kanter et al (1992)</i>	<i>Kotter(1995)</i>	<i>Luecke (2003)</i>

Table 1: A comparison of three models of emergent change, Todnem (2005)



### 2.3 Lewin's 3 Step Model

Lewin's original three stage process theory, of unfreeze – change – refreeze behaviour, is one of the most influential of the 'planned approaches' of change (Elrod and Tippett, 2002). This framework was later regarded as the foundation for what would become known as change management, and the original paper in Human Relations (Cummings et al. 2016; Hussain *et al.*, 2018). Its credentials underpins other frameworks which followed such as a four stage model proposed by Bullock and Batten (1985) which is more specific of the stages exploration, planning, action and integration.

#### Unfreezing

Lewin's model is a planned process for change. In this early model Lewin (1948) discussed the forces which are in place to maintain the status quo. The first stage of unfreezing deals with decreasing these forces and pushing for change. The study identifies that proactive and reactivity is required during this stage to inspire change in a group of individuals.

#### Change

During the change period Lewin identifies the role of leadership for which a change agent for behavioural integration is integral. Studies repeatedly emphasise employee involvement during organisation change and increasing performance. Participation progresses towards a higher quality of change and to overcome resistance to the status quo (V. Vroom and Yetton, 1973; Glew *et al.*, 1995). In a study by Mathieu et al. (2006) the relationship between leadership qualities and planting change agents further increase task commitment, effectiveness and trust in the organisation from available supports and resources. This studies emphasis on effective supports for gaining effective change and building trusts shows strong similarities to the psychological contracts (Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler, 2000; Robinson, 2006).

#### Refreeze

The final stage of Lewin's framework creates awareness around refreezing a new behaviour. Buchanan *et al.* (2005) identifies the gap in literature post change implementation. The study highlights that inertia is a symptom of a

group seeking stability when uncertainty is present. Leadership remains a critical factor post change event. How the sharing of information to empower change agents and accept the new process via education is vital for new behaviour to be achieved (Srivastava, et al. 2006).

Later critics disparaged Lewin's approach as too small in scale. Nor does it take into consideration that conditions in an organisation can alter rapidly and there is a need for flexibility in contrast to the planned process of the three step change theory (Barnard and Stoll, 2010). This commentary is in reference to the specific instruction of change as three steps (CATs) (Cummings, Bridgman and Brown, 2016). Gleick (2011) goes as far as saying that control is near impossible during the change period due to several variables going through a process of change, both internal and external, and resistance creating chaos. Thus, for change to be implemented a system of variables need to be unfrozen.

A keynote of this model is that the study described in this section is older thus the question arises of how applicable this is in current rapidly evolving technology adoption? Endrejat, Baumgarten and Kauffeld (2017) recently reviewed this question in a study in application of Lewin's ideas related to energy consumption behaviours in the workplace concluding that "Lewin's approach towards organisation change is still a vivid way to raise selected behaviour modes to higher standards". This sentiment is echoed by Hossan (2015) in its application during a local government project in an Australian setting, who suggests the above planned approach to change model is appropriate for organisations who have the "top-down, command-and-control" approach to management. The Endrejat, Baumgarten and Kauffeld (2017) study further encourages researchers to provide practical application of Lewin's theories for future study suggesting they are "far from being outdated".

#### 2.4 Lewin-Schein's Model of Transformative change

Lewin's 3 stage model has been developed in detail by Edgar Schein (1996) in his work depicting towards a 'model of managed learning'. In it he pays

homage to Lewin's work citing it as the "theoretical foundation upon which change theory could be built solidly".

Model for Transformative Change:

Stage 1. Unfreezing: Creating the motivation to change

1.1 Disconfirmation

1.2 Creation of survival anxiety or guilt

1.3 Creation of psychological safety to overcome learning anxiety

Stage 2. Change: Learning new concepts and new meanings for old concepts

1.4 Imitation of and identification with role models

1.5 Scanning for solutions and trial-and-error learning

Stage 3. Refreezing: Internalizing new concepts and meanings

1.6 Incorporation into self-concept and identity

1.7 Incorporation into ongoing relationships

(Schein, 1999)

This model reflects the emergent style of change management approaches bringing Lewin's model back to the fore. There is huge emphasis in the early stages of what types of unfreezing there are to create a sense of 'survival anxiety'. Schein's annotation here specifically identifies the emotion which brings about the influence to change. In contrast, Kanter (1992) and Kotter (1995) both sight 'Create a sense of urgency' in their model's for change and provide little detail on they why and how this is achieved.

Schein identifies threats which initiate change can come from economic, political, technological, legal or even internal threats and discomforts. Each of which require bespoke reaction given unique variables in organizations. As such, Schein outlines that creating efficient learning strategy in dealing with said anxiety is key to change management process.

This model describes how learning, and empowering to learn, is a useful method for developing a psychological safety of the individual and leaders during change process. This aspect of employee development is furthermore discussed by Gong, Huang and Farh (2009) who outline employee learning as central in developing a creativity and leadership within a group. Similarly It also reflects the work of Bass and Avolio (1994) in transformational leadership through learning via individual consideration (IC). According to this aspect of leadership development, supporting the individual to attain skills which guide through transition allows self-development in greater volume and considerable trust towards the leadership change initiative can be fostered.

In contrast to emergent change theories dissecting Lewin’s original model, Schein offers a constructive approach to advancing its foundations. Researchers have prod at the original framework suggesting that it is lacking to justify their own framework ideologies (Kanter, 1992; Kotter, 1995). Schein’s approach is well measured in that it supports the theory considered to be the foundation of the change management.

Below is example of Lewin-Schein model used in managing Change through IT, some considered aspects

Unfreezing	Change	Refreezing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivation for change               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Pain</li> <li>– Real improvement</li> <li>– Charismatic leader</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Impediments               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Complex interaction between IT and culture</li> <li>– Reaction to change</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well-defined objective</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Plan               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Leadership</li> <li>– Right people</li> <li>– Team building</li> <li>– Resources</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Stakeholder management</li> <li>• Plan for resistance to change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutionalize change</li> <li>• Overcome lingering resistance to change</li> </ul>

Figure 1 - Using Lewin-Schein for managing change through IT change

## 2.5 Kotter's 8 Step Model



Figure 2 - Kotter's 8 step process change

In contrast to the previous two models, John Kotter's 8 Step Process outlays a linear model for implementing change. His approach is based on experience from working with US businesses and derives from the concept "to make fundamental changes in how business is conducted in order to help cope with a new, more challenging market environment" (Kotter, 1995).

However, what is presented to be a linear model of stages is in reality an in-depth process which requires time and patience for implementation. In a review of effectiveness of Kotter's model amongst small medium enterprises CEO's, Rajan and Ganesan (2017) found popularity for selecting the Kotter's model. The practical response to utilise the model were as Kotter himself outlined, complacency in implementing the steps. Critical mistakes while implementing any stage can slow momentum and have devastating impact on the planned process (Kotter, 1995).

One aspect of the model, which is well known in business academic literature, highlighted in a review by Appelbaum *et al.*, (2012) is that it is geared towards managers. There is no concrete data providing evidence that this is a

functioning formula for change management. The model has not been validated academically rather, Kotter himself has compiled further literature to enhance this own hypothesis from experience in a commercial aspect. He has not provided empirical evidence in his findings that this model is proven to work. Furthermore, aimed at end users in management Rousseau (2006) concludes that “evidence-based practise” remains limited.

However, due to the model’s relatively simple format and as evidenced in Rajan and Ganesan's (2017) study its popularity is undeniable. This fact coincides with (Graetz and Smith, 2010) who suggest using this model in practise to account for variables based on context.

In respect of applying the model, Kotter underlines the value that “changing the behaviour of people” is paramount for success. This mirrors Lewin’s concept of behaviour change, yet in a practical format for application which can in itself be the barrier between failure and success.

## 2.6 Change Agents

Kanter (1999) describes change agents as identifying “leaders of the future” and a way of building skills to identify individuals with potential who bring fresh energy outlook to the organisation and give them necessary supports to flourish. Yet Caldwell (2003) disputes the search for individual change managers as a “quest for the Holy Grail of change agency”. Citing there is a growing distance between the traditional charismatic leader and building strategic central alignment. Rather than the concept of a singular model of change agent is insufficient. Caldwell expands on this proposing four classifications covering: leadership, management, consultancy and team model. He suggests combinations of these change agent classifications should be applied in teams to cover all elements of leadership.

Lacey (1995) further enhances this argument, stating that the effectiveness of combining internal knowledge and expertise of external consulting teams improves project implementation.

Burnes (2011) identifies that for manager to fully take advantage of these emergent theories as a response to change, they must have clear

understanding of the organisation structures, strategies, people and culture. This premise is significant to identify factors which will enhance the change agenda or barriers creating resistance to the change initiative. In relation to Lacey's (1995) point, the decision maker who selects the change agent combinations is vital here.

Not secluded to a senior leader, change agents are sought to support a level of change or introduce a desired behaviour. This can be at any level of organisation from managerial style, system process, structural change or people capabilities. Individuals, or teams, capable of 'openness to lifelong learning' as change programs require leaders to be flexible and show characteristics of developers for change (Howell and Higgins, 1990).

## 2.7 Communication

Gioia (2003, p. 278) states "the reality people confront is the reality they construe". How is reality created? Constructed through social interaction. Gioia's study reports the building blocks of perception and observation is what occurs in front of us. Change agents can inflect on change recipients a type of language which evolves into the idea of organizational culture and even personal experience. Jabri (2010) develops this idea that change agents use utterances speech and language as a way of reifying a change. Social construction of such utterances gives capacity to language and relays a sense of experience. Ford and Ford (1995) add that conversations are what help construct change plans.

From these studies the concept of social construction identifies an individual's thinking is actively creating beliefs, surplus to seeing a change plan being implemented. Dialogue, or communication, by change agents enhances these beliefs that consistent reaffirmation of utterances assist in avoiding limitations which can create resistance.

When a change recipient recalls their experience of an organisation or culture it is the social construction of such utterances which help create their beliefs and personal experiences. This concept works both positively and negatively.

Jabri (2010) adds that the conversation is based on 'on-going talk'. Reiterating the good change which is needed to pursue the correct pathway for change implementation. As with resistance to change where Wiggins (2000) suggests that using a resistance model to plan effective communication, using the correct language to relay important concepts at the correct times is imperative to overcoming stale intervals and avoid unwanted resistance.

Communication is one of the key components identified by nearly all change management plans. As can be seen in figure 1 Kanter, Stein and Jick (1992), Kotter (1995), and Luecke, (2003) all identify communication as vital in their steps for achieving change success. Additionally, Vakola and Nikolaou (2005) discuss communicating the vision through all levels of employee from the top down as imperative in building change readiness, mobilising energy and commitment.

## 2.8 Psychological Contract

A psychological contract refers to 'perceptions of the relationship between employers and employees. IT has significant importance in an exchange relationship as written by Rousseau (1989) on perceived fairness and balance from the point of view of the employee. Factors other than financial remuneration are taken into consideration such as for work-life balance, security and interest in the role. In return an expectation of effort, loyalty and commitment from the employee is expected.

A study by Robinson (2006) found that there is increased trust in the organisation from psychological contracts being honoured. Furthermore, Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler (2000) found significant evidence supporting the psychological contract and employee's commitment to their job in the organisation, when these unwritten contracts were upheld; creating a foundation for a positive relationship between employee and organisation.

There are two aspects of the psychological contract in change management which are necessary to highlight and define the importance of this discipline. Primarily, the fact that these contracts are unwritten and informal. The Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler (2000) study derived that managers who had efficient, clear communication with employees and created an open working



environment were better placed to meet the demands of both employee/employers. The study emphasised that a successful open communication strategy in place was crucial in a time of change when employee uncertainty and negative change may occur.

Secondly, unwritten psychological contracts allow for flexibility in a time of change. If more is expected from an employee in terms of effort or commitment, there is equally available exchange on the employer's behalf of allow for better working conditions or job satisfaction.

## 2.9 Resistance to change

Studying how resistance to change occurs allows change management process to tailor the stages of implementation effectively. As Schein (1996) put it, "just adding a driving force towards change often produced an immediate counterforce to maintain equilibrium". Hence understanding how resistance works is imperative.

Wiggins (2000) suggests using a resistance model to plan effective communication and support throughout the change period. With this philosophy in mind, we can adopt Kübler-Ross's (1973) 5 stages of grief which refer to denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. The stages of grief are to be used as a means of identifying an individual's grief pattern and potential resistance to change. After news of change, employees must take time to digest information. Thus, tailoring to the effect of the resistance stages, change managers can implement the necessary resources to assist employees during this time. Wiggins identifies pre-planning to resistance range of services such as information about the change, training if required, extra resources potentially. Once the information has been accepted, employee vision towards a new commitment creating a driving force for momentum towards change is required.

The "Resistance to change Scale" (RTC) was introduced by Shaul Oreg (2003). The model argued that individual's reaction to change can vary greatly. More importantly he demonstrated that resistance to change is correlated with

personality and context in which change occurs. Oreg's research results reinforce what has been said by Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler (2000); Employees trust of management has a significant effect on behavioural resistance. Management skills and rapport during a period of change is important is maintain momentum toward the vision.

Interestingly Oreg's follow up research in 2006 found that the levels of resistance can be influence by decisions made by management such as the amount of information being provided. For example, the research suggested that if the imminent change was negative for the employees then reinforcing the information at intervals only set as a reminder of potential negative consequences (Oreg, 2006). Adding to this research, Burnes (2015) support the notion of how managers deal with a situation and present change can moderate the reaction of individuals. Specifically, resistance may occur in instances when values and behaviours are disrupted within the organisations structure of workplace which may arouse resistance in the individual (Burnes, 2015). This directly ties in with the psychological contract proposed by Rousseau (1989) which states "resistance arises when changes to employee-employer expectations lead to conflict and incompatible forces".

Kotter & Schlesinger (2008) proposed a variety of options for actively addressing resistance to change. The model uses tactics of education, participation, facilitation, negotiation and coercion. Each to be used in the appropriate circumstances which will vary between organisations, situations and company culture.

Continuing on from Oreg (2003) resistance to change scale and the methods for addressing resistance to change by Kotter & Schlesinger (2008), Barnard and Stoll (2010) suggest when considering a method for addressing resistance that it is useful to consider different personality types such as those expressed in the MBTI manual Myers, McCaulley and Quenk (1998) and the personality assesment model by Benziger (2006). Drawing attention to personality types and the need to understand the psychological contract around values and expectations, Amiot *et al.* (2006) put forward a 'readiness audit' to assess contextual factors before commencing change initiatives. This would allow

bespoke preparation to organisational context as opposed to taking the approach of one fit for all (Burnes, 2017).

## 2.10 Behavioural change

Unconscious desires and fears, well-conditioned behaviour and thinking all contribute towards an individual's behaviour. Barnard and Stoll (2010) makes the point that psychological contract is a useful concept for understanding potential resistance to change from employees who seek a level fairness from their employer. However, behavioural change theories advise that even if a desired behaviour change were to benefit the individual these theories are not as straightforward to implement a change in that individual's behaviour regardless.

In a study of behavioural change Bagozzi, Gurhan-Canli and Priester (2002) highlight there are influential factors which have profound effects on an individual's ability to develop their thought process and rational behaviour. Fears, both conscious and unconscious, conditioned behaviour and desires are identified in this research as such resistors. According to Bandura (1977), along with peer pressure, social learning theory suggests that observing negative or positive feedback renders social reinforcement towards a behaviour change.

This aspect is a theme which is clearly identified in all three models in Figure 1 earlier; identify the leadership (Luecke, 2003), support a strong leader (Kanter, 2000), and create a guiding coalition (Kotter, 1995). Identifying leaders to assist in social learning with positive reinforced attitude towards the desired goal is a common feature seen across all the emergent theories for change management. Collaboration and social involvement during learning phase is central for successful learning according to Allen (1956) who reports that active participation returns greater levels of absorbing newly learned material.

In respect to the frameworks previously mentioned in this review, Lewin (1947) and Schein (1996) pay close attention to the role of leaders as change agents during the respective stages of change to initiate required behaviour. As participation and close social influence between peers leads to decreased

resistance and high change effect for implementing change initiatives (Vroom and Yetton, 1973).

## 2.11 Leadership

Successful change requires inspiring and influential leaders who help individuals in an organisation beat mediocrity, empower them to achieve goals and raise standards of their own. Kotter (2001) portrays this idea when he discusses what leaders really do, leaders prepare organisations for change and assist as they struggle through it.

In an Australian study, Johson and Hartel (2014) found that senior management had reservations of their middle management, believing they did not have the sufficient skills to entice staff performance, motivate and influence leadership. In the study there was a difference in opinion between senior and middle management views of how they perceived their effectiveness. Citing 64% of senior managers and 27% of middle managers view the middle management below average in these disciplines.

Of various aspects in human behaviour, Dulewicz and Higgs (2005) discuss how, leadership is the most commonly studied. Specifically, approaches and styles of leadership including emotional intelligence (Zhang, Cao and Wang, 2018), situational (Strang, 2007), and transformational (Bass, 1985; Iqbal et al., 2015), task oriented approach (Preston, 2015) or relationship oriented approach (Müller and Turner, 2010). Each can be used in different situations of change management where appropriate.

Müller and Turner (2010) research tells us that irrespective of change project style of leadership, the foremost requirement of a project is to remain positive and optimistic of the task ahead to overcome problems which may arise. Adding to this idea, Toor and Arain (2012) outline the style of leadership used in a change management project is conducive towards but not the most fundamental priority in delivering a project.

Keegan and Den Harto, (2004) outline that the leadership style used in a given situation depends on the complexity and size of a project. Projects which are

smaller in scale are often measured with targets and thus lean towards a style of transactional leadership where followers are rewarded for hitting those targets. Bigger projects attract the style of transformational leadership. Detail and longevity of larger projects require attention to followers, displaying respect and outlining challenging achievable goals (Turner and Müller, 2006). Thus, with different styles of leadership, and as with resistance, a number of authors suggest that leaders prefer to use a style which best suits their personality (Dulewicz and Higgs, 2005; Barnard and Stoll, 2010; Müller and Turner, 2010).

## 2.12 Transformational leadership

Burns (1978) wrote of transformational leadership which outlined drawing on followers' key values to raise motivation and commitment towards a project or required behaviour. This style veered towards a follower's consciousness, ethical beliefs and moral values which, Burns discussed, builds internal motivation from the individual.

(Bass and Avolio, 1994) developed the aspects of transformational leadership by creating a set of behavioural components to measure how leaders prime their follower's respective self-interest in a project and leader. These include:

- a. Idealised Behaviour (IB) and Attribution (IA): By building a sense of loyalty and developing a mission and objective which is inclusive for leader and follower's values which both parties commit to attaining this objective.
- b. Intellectual Stimulation (IS): Empowering individuals with time and resources to treat old issues with new or alternative ideas. Believing in them to solve such problems.
- c. Inspirational Motivation (IM): A leader who motivates and creates a high level of confidence and meets the standards of expectations set out by their followers. Articulating a vision which in inspires and following through with the capability to execute the vision effectively.
- d. Individual Consideration (IC): This behaviour is portrayed as by a leader through developing follower skills via a coaching or mentoring role.

Specifically, being aware of business and market needs to enable followers acquire the skills of the future for not only the organization but their careers also.

Avolio and Bass (2004) further devised the multifactor leadership questionnaire (MLQ) to assess appropriate leadership styles. For organizational change, the study outlined transformational leadership style to be the most efficient approach. Of the four leadership styles outlined, Srivastava, Bartol and Locke (2006) illustrated intellectual stimulation, or empowering leadership style, as the most conducive towards team efficiency and organizational performance. Although that study leaned heavily on this one aspect of leadership style its hypothesis was based on leaders who only exhibited a certain behaviour to induce performance. The argument towards empowerment was to encourage all individuals to perform to their fullest potential for the betterment of the organisation.

### 2.13 Transformational leadership through learning

According to Buchanan (1985), knowledge gained through experience is what leads to changes in behaviour. Further asserting that “knowledge is not just the acquisition of knowledge, but the application of it through doing something different in the world”. Herzberg (1968), stated that motivated workers consistently perform the best compared with other types of leadership. And those motivated to learn, achieve and develop are considerably better positioned to reach challenging goals set out for them.

Developing follower’s skills and enabling them to thrive under their own resources is a common aspect for leaders to absorb follower’s commitment. This type of individual consideration and empathy is confirmed in later studies of choosing this style for larger projects and requiring greater attention to followers (Keegan and Den Hartog, 2004; Turner and Müller, 2006). A later study by Gong, Huang and Farh (2009) defines the constructive influence the transformational leadership style has in employee involvement through change. Tayal *et al.* (2018) outline how it develops creativity in employees and

should be encouraged to increase motivation in organisation. Furthermore, suggesting it is the most important factor through sharing knowledge at all levels of organisation from senior management down to individual to make a change process a success.

Leadership involves the ability to initiate change in others. Cummings, Bridgman and Brown (2016) present leadership in 5 activities “motivating change, creating vision, developing political support, managing transition and sustaining momentum”.

## 2.14 Project and programme-led change

### Change Challenges

To bridge the gap between what is outlined in a detailed plan and an array of stakeholders and end-users who have varying needs and requirements at different intervals. Researchers who criticise change management suggest that the change management framework is lacking and requires additional support (Todnem, 2005; Parker *et al.*, 2013). Project management is a complementary literature the critiques promote in those studies as it offers linear steps which in practical application is efficient for managers to follow. Providing a formal structure and takes advantage of synergies between the two areas. This hypothesis is further developed by (Pollack, 2016) who establishes an integrated approach between the two disciplines is more effective when delivering a project.

Though Pollack (2016) also acknowledges that there is a significance in change management origins compared to project management, he still makes argument that the two are closely interlinked rather than separate disciplines.

## 2.15 Managing the transition:

According to McGreevy (2003), a drop in morale during a change period is inevitable. It's how the period during this time is managed to keep momentum at key phases, requires particular attention for planning. Change management requires sufficient planning to avoid various obstacles and people's perception

can account for a substantial portion of them. Bridges (2003), managing the transition calls out key role players such as line managers to monitor effectively and push change initiatives on behalf of the organization. In his work, Bridges reaffirms that perceived planning should be reassessed on a regular basis. Ensuring that plans are fit for purpose, since a variety of variables and circumstances evolve continuously, to avoid roadblocks.

Hence adaptability and flexibility from managers and plans is key to driving momentum forward. Kotter (1995) places huge concern on missing any stages of change process. While adaptability is a necessary aspect of decision making, discipline in sticking to a plan is justifiably essential for successful transition especially when encountering anxiety and motivation pitfalls (Schein, 1996; Müller and Turner, 2010). Buchanan *et al.*, (2005) further discusses that timing and pacing of planned events during a change process can lay wait to success or failure of a project. Delaying stages can lay in undelivered benefits while rushing can stifle momentum by not allowing “time to adapt, and create initiative fatigue, encouraging decay”.

According to Leybourne (2006), studies in the UK financial services sector highlight that improvisation during project’s is becoming increasingly popular with project managers. Allowing for improvisation creates empowerment by allowing ownership towards tackling obstacles which arise creates self-interest towards the project for individuals where managers provide supports (Bass and Avolio, 1994). Though this type of approach is dependent on how risk averse an organisation is.

## 2.16 Conclusion

It is important to note from the literature that managers face the issue of thoroughly understanding all issues which are present and potentially may arise in any change process. Identifying issues and gathering the knowledge should be a preliminary task to help inform strategic planning (Barnard and Stoll, 2010).

From the literature findings, the early frameworks for change management have held their strong in recent studies in modern application (Hossan, 2015; Endrejat, Baumgarten and Kauffeld, 2017).



There is evidence to suggest some miscommunications exist in change management facts such as those referring to the unusually rounded number of '70 percent' change efforts failing (Beer and Nitin, 2000; Keller and Aiken, 2008; Kotter, 2008). As highlighted by Hughes (2011) this suspicious stat does not have empirical evidence supporting it, although they acknowledge it has been quoted in numerous articles since (Hossan, 2015) and is difficult to turn the tide of practitioner's misinformation.

### 3 Methodology

#### 3.1 Introduction

In this section the researcher will outline the steps chosen to perform the research. The study being performed will provide an insight in to change management implication by middle management in the organisation. This chapter will dissect how the information is obtained, the reasoning for choosing the methods utilised, understanding, and where the research will sit in the wider context of the subject matter.

#### 3.2 Proposed Research Methodology

The research in this study will perform a qualitative review to understand stages of change management with middle management as a catalyst for implementation of a change process. The methodology being used during this research will follow the structure outlined by Saunders et al. (2012, p. 160) in the 'Research Onion'. This methodological framework is a detailed guide to ensure deep understanding of why the research is being carried out.

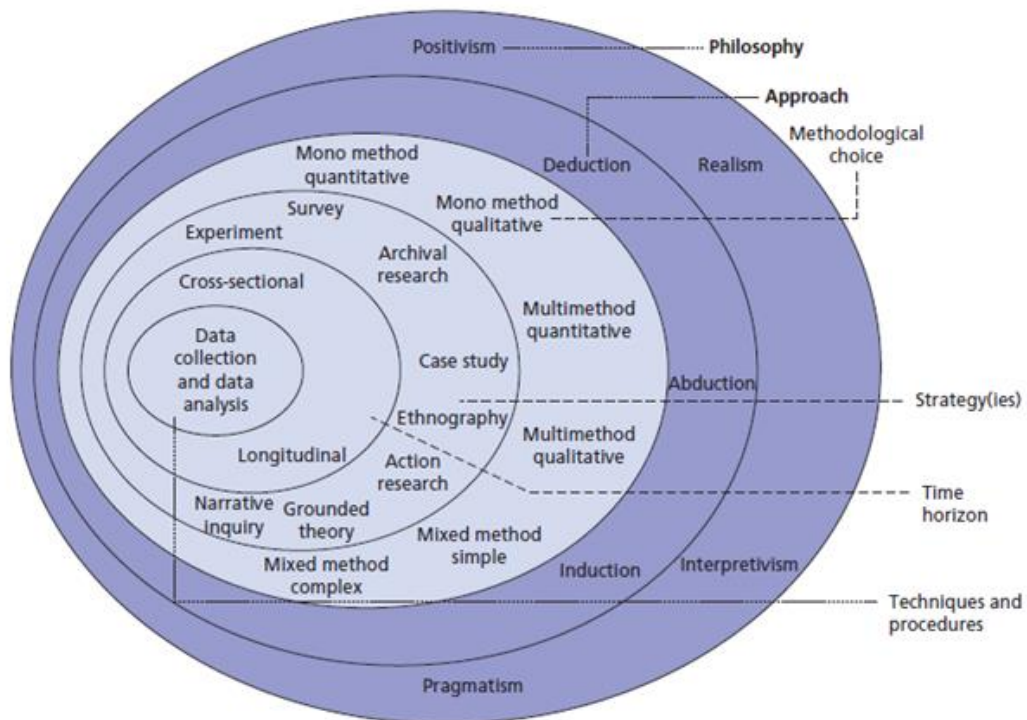


Figure 3 - Saunders Research Onion

This framework provides a layer-by-layer progression for designing the methodology. It is particularly useful in that each stage identified describes a section of the study in terms of philosophy, approach, strategy, method for data collection and techniques.

### 3.3 Research Philosophy

The research philosophy, as outlined in the research onion, is the primary stage of narrowing the methodology. According to Saunders et al. (2012) this stage relates to the author’s perceived understanding of the world and underlying assumptions. They refer to ways of thinking which will form the author’s ideological approach during the research, these approaches are referred to as Epistemology, Ontology and Axiology. *Epistemology*: what the author pertains as ‘acceptable knowledge’ in the field of study. *Ontology*: the author’s view of nature and reality. *Axiology*: the philosophy of judgements and values.

This research is attempting to answer a question which requires detail. The author is using a qualitative approach to acquire detail and depth of responses from interviewees to expand on existing knowledge related to the field of change management from an Irish perspective. The author will adopt an **epistemological** approach as the study is concerned with the knowledge applying change management process in the field of study. The author is recognising the interviewee's judgment and opinion in application of the managing change and accepting this as evidence for the study.

Bryman and Bell (2011) outline there are different positions in relation to epistemology; positivism, constructivism and interpretivism. The later, interpretivism, comes from the intellectual traditions of phenomenology which concerns itself with how "individuals make sense of the world around them" (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p. 18). Since qualitative approach is being used to obtain data, and to further allow for participants expression of detail the author has selected to use a **phenomenological** approach to garnish further understanding toward change management approaches in an Irish business setting. As stated in the research by Nixon (2014) a phenomenological stance allows the author to focus on descriptive feedback and interpret how change implementation is perceived. Nixon's focus was on non-managerial organizational citizens, while in contrast the research presented here will be targeting managerial, or leaders of change process, and how they interpret the stages of implementation. Thus, providing an alternative viewpoint to Nixon's study as an organisation from the change management perspective of the implementer's view.

Englander (2012) states that when analytical quantitative data cannot detect inducing factors toward forces in a study, a phenomenological approach is best suited to comprehend multiple factors. The phenomenological approach being applied in this research is similarly regarded as the most efficient approach for a qualitative study by Welman and Kruger (2001; p189) by "understanding social and psychological phenomena from the perspective of people involved".

Since change management is a process of developing factors evolving continuously (Todnem, 2005), the interpretation of those dynamic factors by participants should be accounted for towards the study. Similarly, the qualitative approach according to Flick (2009) allows the data to remain open and “do justice to the complexity of the object under study”.

### 3.4 Research Approach

Saunders et al. (2012, p 124) define a **deductive** approach as “development of a theory that is subjected to a rigorous test”. As such, this approach revolves around a theory or framework which exists already and will undergo further testing to determine its value in a set of determined circumstances as outlined in the research. Saunders also highlights that the researcher should be independent of the observed research so that not to have influence or bias towards a set of conclusions (Saunders et al., 2012). One aspect of the deductive process which comes under scrutiny is that it allows a ‘cause-effect’ link to arise between variables in the research without taking into consideration the human effect of interpretation (Saunders et al., 2012).

Contrastingly, an **inductive** approach comprises of gathering data, observation of data to seek out patterns, and developing a theory based on empirical evidence in those findings via a sequence of hypotheses (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Thus, Inductive reasoning is a process of gaining knowledge through experience and making an understanding from which the research can provide a conclusion or theory which can be used in further studies.

This study will adopt a **deductive approach** towards analysing phenomena in the data collection and recognising themes which are expressed amongst the interviewees. Using a deductive approach with qualitative measures is recommended by Yin (2009) where it is not feasible to gain meaningful quantitative measures in order to sufficiently test a theory. Some qualitative research strategies start with a deductive approach to test existing theoretical perspectives using qualitative procedures (Yin, 2009)

The nature of research design in this study will be **exploratory** which allows open ended questions to appreciate the perspective of interviewees knowledge and perspective in the area of study. Saunders et al., (2012) suggest using exploratory research in favour of interviewing 'experts' in the area and creating semi-structured interviews to allow participants provide as much quality in responses as possible. This approach is favoured in terms of being more elastic approach to conducting interviews in a free-flowing manner. In addition, Robson (2002, p. 59) describes the advantages of an exploratory study can determine "what is happening; to seek new insights to ask questions and to access phenomena in a new light"

### 3.5 Research Strategy

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) define the research strategy as how the researcher will connect the philosophy and how the data is collected towards achieving the goal on analysing the data. The strategies typically used can incorporate quantitative, qualitative or both types of data gathering depending on the research. Saunders et. al, (2012) outline several types of strategy which can be used to towards answering the research question: case study, ethnography, action research, grounded theory, narrative inquiry, experiment, survey and archival research. It has been further advised that there can be confusion between qualitative research types, which are outlined by a number of research authors of the differences along with suggestions for applicable scenarios (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Saunders et. al, 2012).

In this dissertation the author will develop a **case study** in respect of the organisation which is being studied to collect qualitative data. For the reason's outlined, the sample selected is based on managerial level, or selected project leaders for implementing change process. According to Saunders et al. (2012, p. 179) a case study "explores a research topic or phenomenon within its context". Based on the similar approach taken be Nixon (2014) where a qualitative approach was pursued to gather information of the phenomena of change in respect to non-managerial organisational citizens, this case study will focus on the managerial implementors of change. The author is aware that

findings collected in settings outside of an Irish organisation may differ. Hence the author has chosen this strategy in the Irish setting for potential differential results, and to allow for un-forecast phenomena which may arise in the study.

### 3.6 Research choice: Mono method qualitative

Choosing a methodological choice for research design to acquire efficient data forwards a conclusion depends on the level of depth and availability of data which can be collected. Saunders et al. (2012, p. 165) outline mono method and multiple methods combinations which can be integrated as shown in the figure 3 below. For a mono method, to choose from quantitative and qualitative choice, is to determine between numerical and non-numerical data.

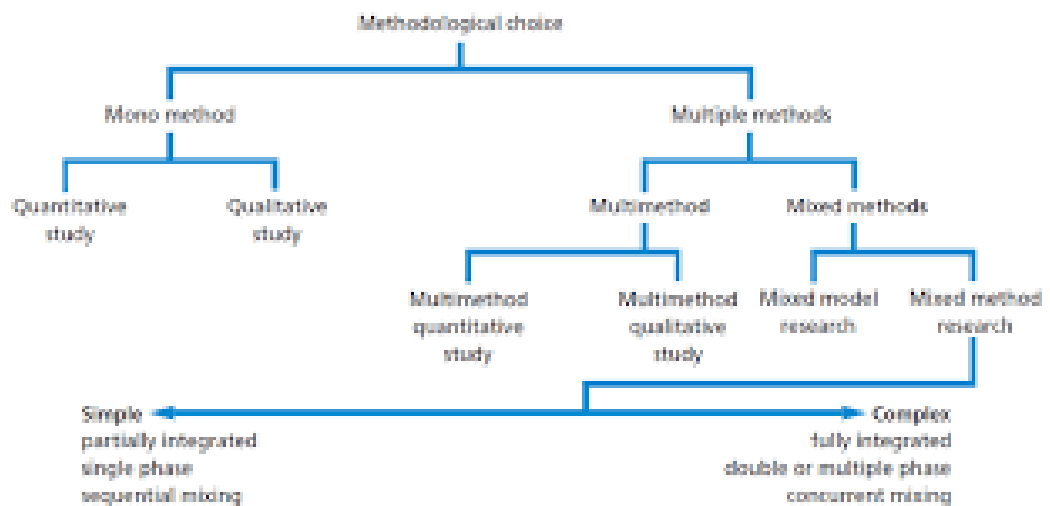


Figure 4 - Methodological choice

This study will use a **mono method qualitative choice** which refers to the use of interviews for collecting subject data in a singular approach. Subsequently this data will be analysed for the findings of this research. The benefits of qualitative approach compared to quantitative in this study is preventing a reduction of data, where discovery in the process and experience of participants is desired outcome. A quantitative approach has the potential to limit the scale of feedback from questions where in contrast qualitative methods have potential to produce new ways of interpreting existing data to

construct a framework. Thus allowing the gathered data to be analysed in greater detail (Pamela Atieno, 2009).

There are potential weaknesses in using this method of data collection which could be a limitation of the data collected. Multiple methods are preferable to improve reliability. However singular approach is more practical in a purposeful sample given the nature of the phenomena which this case study aims to record.

### 3.7 Secondary data collection:

Secondary data provides a source of information which is both time efficient, cost efficient, and reliable when sourcing peer reviewed publications where raw data has already been subjected considerable scrutiny and compiled for the benefit of future researchers (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 307). While using secondary data, it is vital to note that the data collected in presented journals, books and reports have been collected for a purpose suited to those findings. Hence, existing secondary data is there to guide research but should still applicable to questioning to determine if it is suitable for referencing in towards further research (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

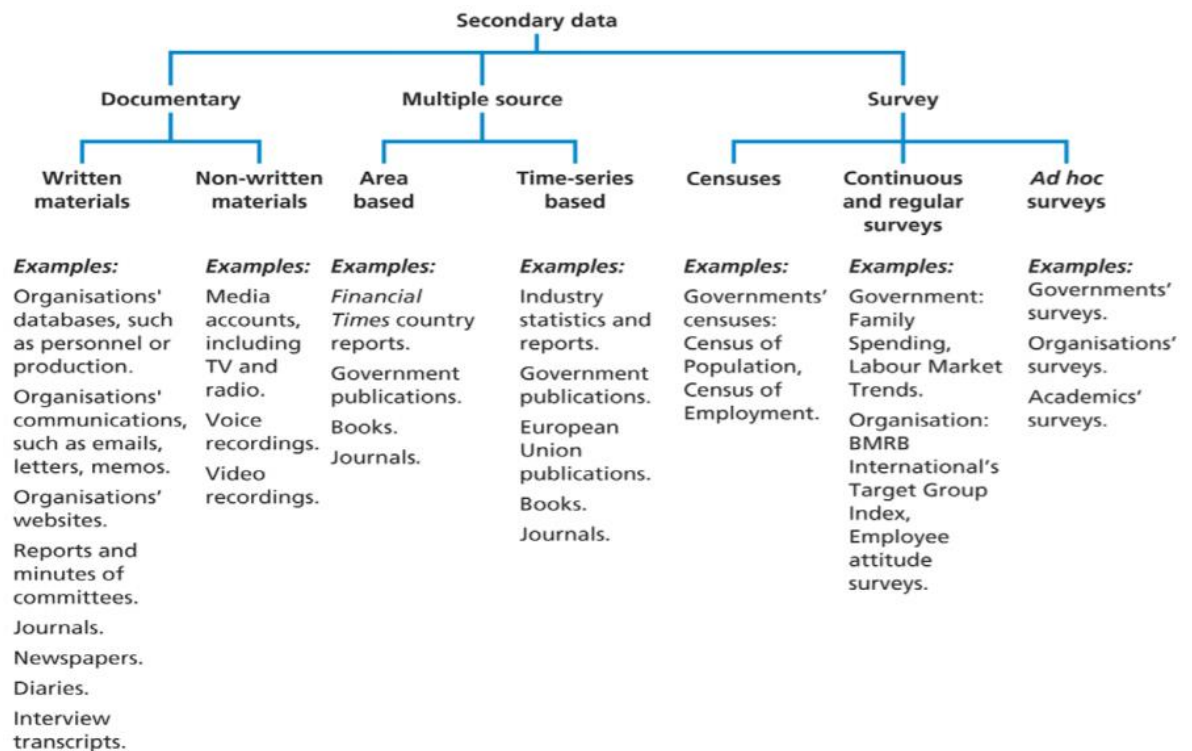


Figure 5 - Types of secondary data

Whilst compiling the literature review secondary data sources contributed to the authors knowledge on the subject matter greatly and influenced the direction of research methodology significantly based on previous studies. The author has obtained material from multiple database sources, academic journals, case studies and textbooks (available via the National College of Ireland).

### 3.8 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is associated with an phenomenological and interpretivist view to assist in dissecting social meanings from the subject matter (Saunders et al. 2012, p. 163). This type of research gathering is sometimes referred to as 'naturalistic' in the sense that it occurs in a natural setting. Qualitative refers to data gathering which is non-numerical form, it allows for greater depth in answers and elasticity for interpreting various factors which are interdependent of each other. As previously stated, allowing for flexibility in the area of change management is of concern as continuously moving variables require ongoing evaluation to ensure change plans are fit for purpose (Bridges, 2003). Thus providing a platform to allow for evolving responses to change from interview participants is most suited to this research. Cooper and Schindler (2013) proclaim the semi-structured in-depth interviews are suited towards an exploratory study where the researcher has flexibility to 'probe' interviewees answers further to explain in detail their responses.

The author hosted semi-structured in-depth interviews with all participants who were from one Irish organisation in order to gather reliable data to meet the objectives as outline in introduction in chapter 1. The interviews were face to face with a single participant at a time. The author has selected to use this method of data gathering based on the experience in another study which used this method successfully in the field of change management (Nixon, 2014). It is the favoured method of data collection as a tool for developing further dimensions of research which could potentially provide unforeseen insights in the subject (Antwi and Kasim, 2015).



The types of questions used in the interviews were based on suggestions by Saunders et al. (2012, p. 391) who discuss the 'appropriate use of different types of question' between open ended, probing and specific closed questions where appropriate. There is emphasis on the tone and wording of questions during the interview so as not to use emotive or suggestive language rather questions should be formed in a factual way. Based on these suggestions for semi-structured interviews the author elected to use open-ended questions accompanied with selective probing questions during the interview based on the authors initiative to expand on responses for collecting primary data as harvest the most information possible.

It is relevant to highlight the time horizon of this study. This refers to studying the same set of observational phenomena either in a snap shot, cross-sectional, or repeatedly over a period of time, longitudinal, (Bryman and Bell, 2011). This study conducted a **cross-sectional** examination which is important to note from the feedback of the pilot interview.

The author trialled a pilot interview with a member of the managerial team who was not part of the qualitative research. The pilot interview highlighted that scenario-based information needed to be provided prior to the interviews, which was subsequently provided in the participant research request form. It was beneficial to ask factual questions about the present before moving on to the past or future questions (Bryman and Bell, 2011). This was due to the early stages of the project having been implemented approximately 6-8 months prior to the interview. In contrast, questions targeted around more recent events in the project were found to have quicker, clearer responses in the pilot. The interview schedule did not change significantly post pilot, other than the author highlighting sections where probing questions were of use to develop answers from participants.

### 3.9 Population

Participants were selected on the basis of purposeful sampling. This was in direct regard to the title of the dissertation which requires a managerial level of experience and knowledge on the grounds for change management

implementation. Working within the organisation the author selected a credible sample of interviewees who have the required experience and knowledge required for the interviews. The requirements of the change lead team were to examine, review and implement the software change to a unit size of between 120 – 130 users. As part of their requirements they also had to provide training to users, educate them on the system and the benefits of the new process, highlight the potential risks during transition and desired outcomes of the project.

The author interviewed 6 participants who, as previously mentioned, were involved in the change management project for implementing a new software used in the business unit. Eight invitations were sent out to participants, two decline due to unavailability during the period allocated for interviews. The author has confidence this method of primary data collection would produce the necessary information to develop the field of change management literature in an Irish setting.

### 3.10 Analysing Qualitative Data

To gather the qualitative data, the author chose to record the interviews by means of **audio-recording** using a software which auto transcribed to text. This process was selected due to time saving benefits opposed to manually transcribing audio recording for each interview and to assist in recalling the content in detail (Saunders et al. 2012, p. 553). Immediately after each interview, a soft copy of the audio recording was stored in a secure encrypted location with password protection. Subsequently the audio recording was removed from the recording device to ensure the data was not misused.

Bryman and Bell (2011, p. 572 - 590) refer to and describe four ways of inductively analysing qualitative data including thematic analysis, analytic induction, grounded theory, narrative analysis. Additionally, Saunders et al. (2012) describe three further types in discourse analysis, template analysis and generic option categorising data. From the research literature the author's preferred option of **thematic analysis** was applied in this research. This method refers to 'search for themes and patterns' which arise across the data

sets collected. The benefits of thematic analysis as outlined by Saunders et al. (2015, p. 579) are to help:

- Comprehend large amounts of qualitative data
- Swiftly integrate numerous scripts by extracting related data
- Identify patterns and themes
- Develop and test theories based on apparent theme patterns
- Draw and verify conclusions

After reviewing the data collected, the author did not need to host follow up interviews for supplementary primary data material.

### 3.11 Ethical Issues

Ethical considerations are a requirement of any study to ensure data is gathered to high standards of fairness and to protect the integrity of the subject matter, participants and the author of the research so that respective rights are upheld within the study (Saunders et al., 2012). For interviewees who participate in a research study, Biggam (2011) articulates consideration needs to be taken so that confidentiality is adhered to, transparency on the subject matter and outcomes are provided in respect of their voluntary contribution towards the study.

The author has ensured that each interviewee will remain anonymous, even where participants have not made this a requirement of their contribution towards the research. Prior to the interview participants were made aware that they could, if they wished to do so, stop the interview at any time and discard any information obtained up until 48 hours after the event had occurred.

### 3.12 Limitations to research

Consideration should be taken towards possible limitations of the research due to factors beyond the control of the research and in conducting qualitative research which may result in researcher bias, study replication issues, interpreting data concerns.

There may be limitations due to the small sample size in gathering qualitative data. Though this concern has been addressed previously as the study

required experience and knowledge in the field change management from participants in an Irish firm. The author acknowledges a limited number of people in an organisation would possess the required field of knowledge and to rectify this concern the study should be replicated in other Irish organisations.

Prior to commencing the research, the author had highlighted the purposeful sample of participants who had knowledge and experience, as per the title of the dissertation. Based on the qualitative data gathered, the author is satisfied with the quality of information and does not deem this to be a concern as any potential shortcomings in information are used towards the findings.

Interpretations of data may be biased on behalf of the author due to the available knowledge in the field of study and also employed by the organisation. Again, this limitation may be addressed by replicating a similar study in other Irish firms.

Given the time limitations in this dissertation review, it was not practical for the author to seek out qualitative gathering from further organisations but could be an area of future study. The author defends the use of qualitative data analysis for basis of the study due to the practicality of gathering the data in a small sample size, being able to converse directly with those involved for in-depth understanding and also to potentially highlight areas where participants would like to develop in future change management projects which would add to the study.

## 4 Chapter 4: Research findings

### 4.1 Introduction

In this section the objective is to discuss the findings which arose during interviews and qualitative analysis thereafter. There were several themes which developed throughout each conversation which will be highlighted in the findings based on their frequency of referral and importance as proven evident across each interview.

## 4.2 Self-led learning

Change management techniques are important for managers to have sufficient knowledge of necessary planning to implement a successful initiative. While assessing education and consistent learning of interviewees in this research, the researcher began with some warmup questions as how participants sourced management information. Though not a part of the direct findings as outlined below it is important to note that a number of the managers interviewed attempted to keep up to date with management concepts. Managers who revealed they had some level of formal management education tended to expose themselves to influential authors via mediums of LinkedIn and YouTube as source of continual self-learning.

“I think if they want to keep up, yes. I think suddenly, I'm a lot older than a number of my teams. You have to bear in mind that you've millennials working for you now. Very, very different way of thinking” (S1).

## 4.3 Demographics

The participants selected for interviews had varying educational backgrounds and different managerial experience levels. All participants were involved in a major change project within the organisation in the case study which was implemented over an 8-month period. Of the six participants, two were employed by a project management consultancy firm and were working in the organisation for the entirety of the change project. Two were senior management of the organisation with whom had change management experience from previous projects and education in the subject area. The final two were middle managers in the organisation and also had change management experience from previous projects within the business unit. On average, participants had between 5-10 years of experience in managing change projects.

From the demographics of interviewees, the researcher was able to gain insight into the levels of depth and thought received from the different levels of management. The qualitative findings naturally revealed there were more clinical change management knowledge the higher up the managerial ladder and experience managers had. More accurately it is to say, managers had

common concerns while others had specific concerns when identifying change issues.

For participant privacy, as outlined in consent forms signed by each participant, names and organizations will be anonymized. Interviewee's have been given the following codes which will be referenced in any findings:

Table 2 - Interviewee management positions

Senior MGMT	Middle MGMT	Consultant MGMT
S1	M1	C1
S2	M2	C2

#### 4.3.1 ETHNICITY

Five of the six participants were from an Irish background and have built careers in Irish firms. Their answers are heavily influenced by the traditional hierarchical organisations as found in Ireland and western culture. One senior manager interviewed who is employed directly in the organisation is from a Nordic background. This individual highlighted the differences in traditional organisational structure and management approaches. Thus, made for interesting comments as to how change management is implemented and accepted between traditional Irish and Nordic organisations.

#### 4.4 Introduction:

The research provides an in-depth view of managers concerns and aspirations towards implementing a change initiative. There were several themes which arose during the qualitative analysis that could be discussed in the findings. The researcher has opted to select three major themes which were evidently important to the participants interviewed and discuss the elements in detail related to sub themes as were identified in the qualitative analysis.

The themes discussed in here have resonance with the change management frameworks highlighted in the literature review. AS mentioned in the introduction and which should be mentioned again before reporting the

findings, there can be gaps between theory and application of theory in change management literature. Some familiar themes are evident and emerging change management practices add to literature.

## 4.5 Implementation of change

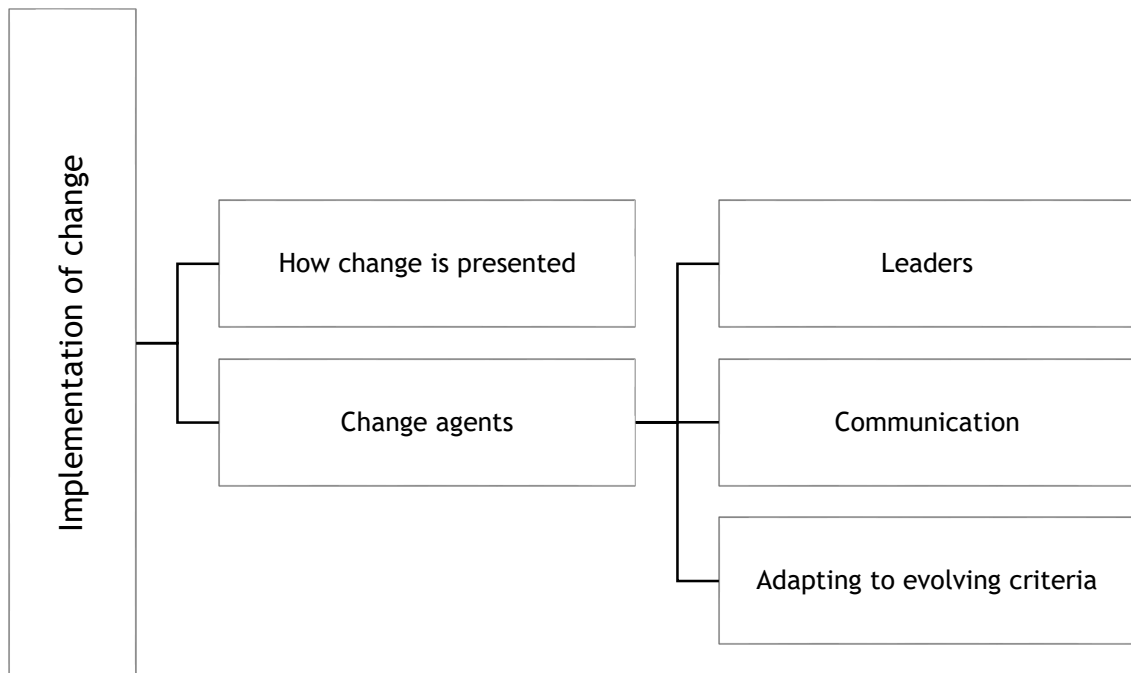


Figure 6 - Implementation of change

### 4.5.1 HOW CHANGE IS PRESENTED

The research findings demonstrated that the initial stage of a change management project represented a significant juncture, not just for the project, for the organisation. The results found that strategic tactics were used to highlight the status of a change initiative in order to be visible, have clear direct communication with the right people and set a tone of importance for the project. Specifically showing that internal and external resources were being called upon such as senior personnel within the organisation, consultants in the form of project management teams and software providers.

Gathering the attention of correct personnel and discussing the change at a high level, allowed participation from all teams and managers to be informed of desired change ahead. This led to two factors which were deemed crucial in a chain of events:

- Collaboration with internal and external business units for effective planning
- A chain of informants within the organisation



The first factor is consistent with the views outlined by Kotter (1995) and Kanter, et. al (1992) who refer to creating a shared vision between stakeholders in order to gain commitment and buy in from all parties.

The second factor leads to the sub theme of change agents and communication network which is referred back to like a revolving door throughout all the topics discussed in the interviews.

#### 4.5.2 CHANGE AGENT'S COMMUNICATION NETWORK

The research found numerous names associated with the heading of this theme including influencers, leaders, champion network or as the title portrays change agents. Regardless of academic titles or buzz words associated with the role in a communication network, this method of communication requires visibility and active engagement throughout all stages of change projects.

##### 4.5.2.1 LEADERS

When discussing this topic, interviewees emphasized how they selected change agents. Based on identifying leaders and managers of the future, individuals who showed promising performance, knowledge and commitment to their role. For this position in a change project, a requirement was a champion who had followers on their team and good relationship with colleagues.

Kanter (1999) emphasises that change agents are “leaders of the future” and for successful management team you need different types of leader combinations as pointed out by Lacey (1995).

“We're looking for the next people to step up to that (level of leadership). It's always people who are willing to think differently. I don't want a team of people who say yes sir no sir, I want people who challenge the status quo and cover alternative ways of considering things” (S2).

S2's discussion distinctly referred to a potential leader's action and willingness to be inquisitive and bring ideas in their role. Highlighting that current industry leaders generally have a common background, but leaders of the future may be completely different as developing industry requires to think outside of the box.

#### 4.5.2.2 COMMUNICATION

“A ‘tell-istration’ telling people what the point is the programme, what's happening, what's coming, what's in it for you, what are the benefits of this operationally, from a customer perspective?” (C1).

The research found that varying uses of communication were expected by change agents for effectiveness. To assist, it was uncovered that communication structure in change management projects must adopt a ‘flattened’ organisation system in terms of communication distribution. Management utilised the strategy of a ‘champion network’ to have direct communication lines with all teams. Tactics such as social inclusion of change agents in groups of employees was harnessed by promoting a change agent from within various social groups in each business unit. Thus, any information which was relayed between management and change agents could be delivered to all employees.

For this strategy to be effective, there can be no barriers in communication on descending management levels. Frequent communications in forms of email, posters and announcements of updates to employees with encouragement to contact change agents and managers for information.

This thought is echoed by Srivastava, Bartol and Locke (2006) who identifies critical function of a change agent is to provide “behavioural integration in tasks and social dimensions”. Furthermore, (Bandura, 1977) Social learning theory highlights the importance of peer learning which reflects the usefulness of the strategy employed by management in the organisation to use change agents.

#### 4.5.3 ADAPTING TO EVOLVING CHANGE CRITERIA

“If it doesn't work the first time, I suppose you got to take the learnings from changes, re-do-it and see does it get any better. It's always about adapting to the change” (M2).

The final aspect of this theme which provided enough evident concern for inclusion from interviewees was the aspect of change as an evolving dynamic. You can only plan for what you know or envisage is going to work. Planning failures inevitably have a knock-on effect to teams moral and communicating failures is not a pleasant task for management. With open communication lines

it is necessary to be honest about software issues as they inevitably cause delays to users. Holding back information of such issues is unlikely to receive a positive response from teams and thus keeping informed of progress and setbacks alike for honesty is necessary. All interviewees acknowledged planning failures occur and require adaptability.

Similarly to these sentiments, the concept of change management geared towards 'change readiness and facilitating for change' is reverberated throughout emergent change management literature (Tondem, 2005). Adapting to the flux and flow of change calls upon teams acceptance to issues where psychological contracts are of imperative use during uncertain disruption (Rousseau, 1989b; Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler, 2000).

The research findings uncovered the need to be aware of over optimism in what was expected versus what can realistically be achieved with their resources:

"I may have a member of the team that thinks they'll be able to deliver on something quicker than what I actually know they can. And it wouldn't be due to any of their fault, because they have side dependencies that they would have. So, if they're reliant on receiving information from other units, then I know that they're not going to hit the deadline that they would want" (C2).

Awareness was evident with more experienced change managers, as they realised the potential for such occurrences and anticipate these issues in planning by adding time for flux and flow of change project as outline by Tondem (2005) and also setting small goals to re-evaluate regularly. Hence the justification of milestone goal setting with interval checking. This planning aspect is more of a project management feature but serves as reference in keeping teams up to pace with change.

#### 4.5.3.1 REGULAR MILESTONE GOALS AND RE-EVALUATION

"Build momentum and as you build it, you know, you create a sense of something's happening" (S1).

This aspect was referred to in forms of managing timelines and creating deadlines for urgency. Management identified the importance for milestones setting towards building momentum in a goal-oriented manner during planning stages. It portrayed a quantifiable measure for teams to maintain track record of targets they are hitting. Justifiably, milestone tracking is a way for management to keep track of team's performance. Issues with hitting milestones resulted in management attention to why, what and how goals are being missed in order to re-evaluate and support their teams' efforts towards the change criteria. Technical issues of software implementation required work around, behavioural issues need time and resources to rectify.

## 4.6 Management's analysis of change effectiveness

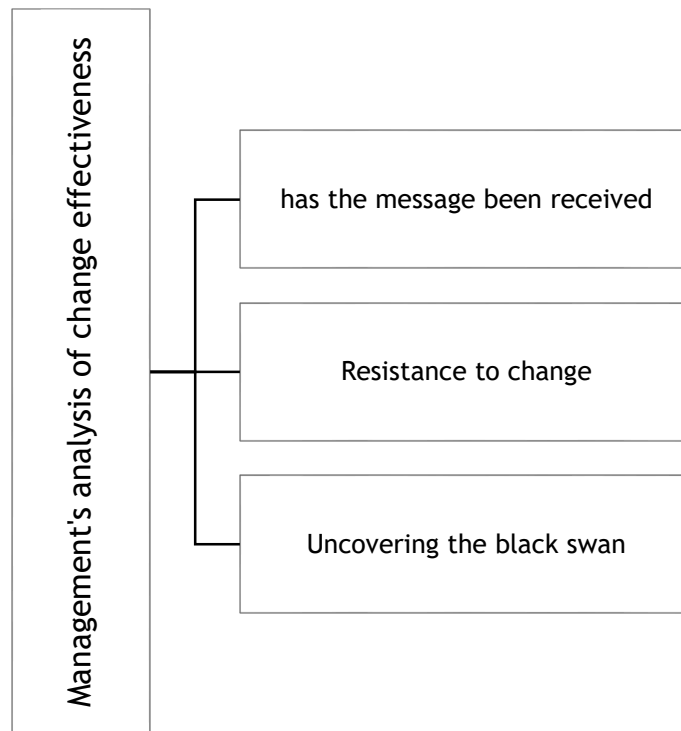


Figure 7 - Management's analysis of change effectiveness

As the research title suggests, the aim of this study is to determine managements influence in change projects and how receptive employees are to change. From the qualitative analysis, the researcher was able to determine a number of observations upon which management practised their own analysis of change effectiveness on teams and employees. Three main issues which occurred related to communication being received by employees, strategies to combat resistance, and unearthing the hidden 'black swan'. There was also discussion on the culture of the organisation in relation to these issues.

### 4.6.1 HAS THE MESSAGE BEEN RECEIVED?

Houston can you repeat please... Ensuing a message has been clearly received by team members was a re-occurring theme in the research. Steps are taken to ensure communication avenues are present through a business unit as previously highlighted in the use of a change agents. Although useful

in relaying messages and unearthing feedback, management felt a need to have direct feedback from teams:

“What I think is as clear as day until somebody asks me something, I’ll have used a jargon or something that they just don’t understand” (S1).

Five of the six interview participants said they identified with a relationship-oriented approach to leadership. Thus, they did not feel the need to go out and interview people on their thoughts, it came naturally to their managerial approach. The sixth interviewee referred to themselves as ‘goal-oriented’ in that they could see the usefulness in being both relationship and technical depending on requirements to get a job done.

Relevance of getting direct feedback from teams was revealed in one comment when the researcher uncovered further managerial strategies for analysing change communication effectiveness:

“It’s watching the body language with people can be a real giveaway. And I would have done a couple of courses on body language and how to read people. And that has played a huge part.... It creates a trust. It just knocks down some of those negative barriers, or just the worry and pride. People get very scared by change” (S1).

In the form of ‘reading body language’ to identify resistance and communication barrier issues having regular face to face sit downs, management checking in with teams directly. The Relevance for this type of exercise allowed management to assess what potential issues they are facing and how to approach the issues to influence change.

#### 4.6.2 RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

A second key aspect which was unearthed by three respondents in managements strategic planning was how to go about using social learning and peer pressure towards effective change management. The tactic employed is as follows:

“One of the key things is take the most negative person and get them on side and those will follow. It’s a bit of a trick, but it works. I suppose, bit like playing

football, take the best player out and the rest of them are much easier to deal with” (S1).

Accompanied with change agents, or to strategically select a negative individual to become an influencer of change can redevelop their attitude as it puts them in the centre of attention. Echoed by Bandura (1977), social learning theory suggests that positive feedback renders towards the desired behaviour change. Furthermore this strategy reflects the work of Vroom and Yetton (1973) in that participation and close social influence between peers leads to decreased resistance and high change effect for implementing change initiatives.

“Certain people can't see beyond what is happening today. And they as an organisation, want to feel the pain first before we want to make the change” (S2).

This demonstrated managements active pursuit in influencing teams' uptake of change requirement by reducing the factors of resistance within teams. As highlighted by Kübler-Ross (1973) in the stages of grief, planning for resistance can help overcome those barriers. In this instance the research has unveiled how management in this Irish firm plan to reduce or remove some the instigators of resistance in similar fashion.

#### 4.6.3 UNCOVERING THE 'BLACK SWAN'

What is a 'black swan'? This term arose in one interview which was fitting to refer to the approach towards analysis of change management issues. The term black swan has become synonymous with Chris Voss former FBI negotiator (Voss and Raz, 2016), which refers to something rare, or hidden, that has great influence on negotiating. As management are essentially influencers of change themselves, it is their specific duty to reveal the black swan, if it exists, to address any issues and move forward with change implementation.

A multitude of factors which can be associated with the term black swan in particular one interviewee referred to the need of being aware of hidden agendas:

“I do object, and I don't like when I call it this, ‘change terrorism’ where people go behind the backs of people try to do anything possible in the programme, or even personal change, to prevent the change from being successful. Or trying to provide misinformation or just to try to anything they can do to prevent change from occurring” (S2).

One aspect of this ideology is that ‘change terrorism’ is an active pursuit, people with agenda against moving towards change and un-wanting to participate if it goes against their needs, wants or beliefs which would obviously be detrimental in any change environment. Another aspect which the qualitative research findings demonstrated, are factors which could attest to this type of behaviour from employee's including fears, security, the unknown and simply not wanting to change. Something innocuous as a rumour spreading can impact on people's fears in such a manner. This has been confirmed by Bagozzi, Gurhan-Canli and Priester (2002) whom referred to profound effects of fears, both conscious and unconscious, which condition individual's behaviour as such resistors. This research resonates with the ideology of the black swan uncovering an unconscious resisting factor, difficult to uncover if it is not even perceived to be known by an individual.



## 4.7 Factors of change reception

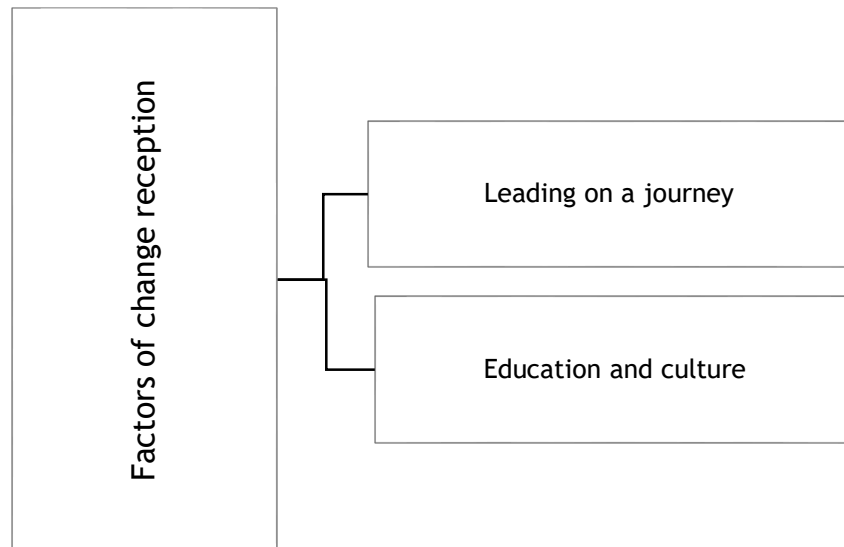


Figure 9 - Factors of change reception

The research indicated perceived factors for team and individual change reception were evident. There was common referral in all interviews to leading individuals on a journey and providing the criteria for them to grow in their careers. Both of these themes leaned towards the type of culture which was present for employee development and what the organization of the future will be like.

### 4.7.1 LEADING ON A JOURNEY

The phrase 'leading on a journey' is terminology which encompasses several factors of employee development and managerial style of action. The research discovered a heavy leniency towards interviewee's belief in relationship style approach to leadership. Coupled with need to understand personalities that change is affecting:

"To influence change, you need to understand the people that you're trying to take on a journey of change" (S2).

This mentality resonates with the work of Myers, McCaulley and Quenk (1998) personality type indicators and Benziger's (2006) personality assessment

model in order to get the most out of individuals who work in teams. Participants in this organisation believe the human skills involved in change management can often be the hardest to grasp as a manager as it is the most unquantifiable skill. Participants were aware there is a need to be more receptive towards individuals in modern organisational culture. Clear reference to allow individuals challenge and questions decision making:

“I'm a very big believer in the Swedish model of management, but it's very flat organisation, and working with people to initiate change, and allow people to have an opportunity to comment and change” (S2).

Traditional hierarchical structure in the Irish firms is very much direction led decision making. The flat organisation structure provides an opportunity for teams to discuss and challenge confidently. To provide a practical element in allowing individuals confer in decision making, tactics are deployed to gather feedback in the forms of:

- rate decision making of management (on a scale of 1-5)
- ‘you said, we did’ – putting feedback into action

These actions allow for all individuals to confer their support and provide feedback towards decision making. Empowering the individual to be part of the planning process creates evaluation to ensure all teams and individuals are on board with change. Necessary attempts to justify why people may be unhappy with a decision can then be resolved.

“It's great if people who haven't heard you or have something to say that they say it, and I whatever format is conventional or participation in workshops, or whatever that is, I feel like this only constructive feedback. And I'm very much for allowing people to feel that they can do that” (S2).

This concept reflects the transformational leadership styles outline by Burns (1978) Bass and Avolio (1994) to raise motivation and commitment towards a project. The flattened organisation structure in terms of communication dispels communication boundaries within the business unit.

The researcher had anticipated to enquire which styles of communication were being used and which were effective. No participant concluded that there was

a single formula. Rather than when dealing with a multitude of personalities it is necessary to hit all styles of communication as one senior manager quoted:

“different things work for different people...you got to do something different for everyone to make sure you reach everyone” (S1).

#### 4.7.2 EDUCATION AND CULTURE

“You have to have that kind of mindset that is very open for change, and very much in a way that knowing that tomorrow is going to be different from today. And coming to work in the morning, you don't know what your day looks like, because something might have happened” (S2).

The final aspect of change reception which was prominent in the research was ensuring that individuals had, or would work towards gaining, the required skill set for utilising the change, such as a new software. Time is a requirement to upskill staff and providing teams with the resources to educate themselves on how to use a new software.

The exposure to this type of change in an environment where active software testing resulted in management awareness of employee's experience with change initiatives. Relevantly new starters, millennials, whom are undergoing their first big change project in a business environment were deemed far less responsive to the change and required more individual consideration towards the change aspects. While in contrast more experienced employees understand change projects have teething errors and require patience:

“it was a great opportunity for anybody. I think it's good to put more staff in that position now so they can see it from start to end, I suppose appreciate what they have at the end of it all” (M1).

All interview participants referred to the journey in respect of building individuals understanding and experience which will benefit them. There was acknowledgement by some participants that the inhouse training can be quite niche in terms of usefulness for employee's careers moving outside of the organisation. However, the project 'change experience' itself was deemed useful as acceptance to change grows along with the understanding that implementation issues will inevitably arise. To counter this potential negative

aspect, interviewees referred to available supports within the organisation to assist employees developing their own education and skillset to better their careers.

#### 4.8 Conclusion

The aim of the interviews was to unearth managements lived experience of their influence on change management initiatives towards employee acceptance. The assessment was based on an implementation of new software which is the biggest technical change the organisation had undergone in over a decade. The findings showed evidence of how management assess their own impact on change in their teams along with strategies employed to manage the effectiveness of change and maintain momentum towards the end goal.

## 5 Chapter 5: Conclusions & recommendations

### 5.1 Introduction

The divide between academic literature and practical application of change management frameworks draws question as to how managers perceive their own change effectiveness to influence employees through change initiatives. Where the literature does come into force, is outlining high level structure of a framework to be used. Thereafter the expertise and knowledge of bespoke decision-making resides with the professional in the organisation. In this section we will discuss managements effectiveness of influencing change, where the academic literature ends, and management starts. We will also attempt to link the objectives outlined in chapter 1 to the findings in the research.

### 5.2 Sourcing change management information

Applicability of change management frameworks, such as Lewin (1951) and Schein (1996), from a high level can be vague if at all visible in day to day management practices. Based on the findings the researcher would argue there is no reference to the use these change management frameworks for

guiding decision making on a day to day level of influencing employee's acceptance to change. Rather as outlined in the introduction they are guidance for executives. Management did refer to different aspects of change factors such as behavioural, leadership style, factors of transformational leadership, as these aspects are complementary in influencing employee's effectiveness of change uptake. In contrast, awareness of the psychological concepts appears to be more beneficial while in direct management of teams.

Based on the findings the researcher also argues that successful managers need to be aware of the literature to be able to influence how they can analyse motivation and resistance in their teams. Styles of leadership also fit into this category, though it is overwhelmingly apparent that individual managers have their own preferred style of leadership and tend to stick to it.

Based on evidence presented in sourcing management literature, there is reason to believe the profession of change management is moving away from academic literature due to the commercialisation of management as a discipline. This argument is based on evidence in how participants revealed their source of information from mediums of LinkedIn and YouTube. Furthermore referenced concepts from commercial book's such as the 'black swan' which is synonymous with Voss and Raz (2016). Strongly adding to this concept, in the knowledge of popular change management advocate Kotter (1995) who both writes academic reports and practices in management (Kotter, 2019). This links back to earlier findings made in the literature review, which highlights there is self interest in feeding the change management wheel of information, or misinformation (Hughes, 2011).

### 5.3 Analysis of managements perceptions of change

Management's own perception of how they analyse change can hold obvious bias. In one regard, self-analysis is a useful tool which the findings have provided insight into. In another regard, to analyse your own effectiveness of change management provides self-learning in practice.

A set of tools and tactics to be able to do this within the organisation would be useful. The researcher believes tactics used for analysing change effectiveness uncovered in the findings fills in some of the criticisms in earlier change management frameworks being too vague such as in Lewin's change as three steps model.

Participants interviewed veered towards answers of what can be done or why we will do such an exercise towards analysing effectiveness. In practise, an organisation needs to see results towards hitting milestone goals and achieving results. Hence having a set of actions or tools to analysis influence seems more practical.

#### 5.4 Objectives

As outline in chapter 1 the objectives of this research were to:

- To identify aspects of management which promote the speed of employee acceptance towards change
- To identify managements perceptions in dealing with change
- To identify a set of practices or tools used to overcome barriers in employee acceptance to change management
- To provide a set of recommendations based on management practices to influence the soft aspects of change management

In relation to the first objective; *To identify aspects of management which promote the speed of employee acceptance towards change*. The researcher has concluded that management take necessary steps towards including employees in decision making of change initiatives at a team level. The aspects of managerial practise which refer to this include the practices of:

- rate decision making of management (on a scale of 1-5)
- 'you said, we did' – putting feedback into action

These democratic practices allow teams have a much greater participation in decision making to provide inclusion. This transformational leadership style leans on aspects of social inclusion and empowerment for encouraging people to be involved, making the change a part of everyone's interest.

In relation to the second objective; *To identify managements perceptions in dealing with change*. Change is obviously a difficult task to implement. How to manage its implementation by performing an effective analysis to ensure the message is being transferred is critical. The research findings have concluded the use of tactics to ensure direct communication is being received which requires management to source feedback directly from employee's:

“What I think is as clear as day until somebody asks me something, I'll have used a jargon or something that they just don't understand” (S1).

In relation to the third objective; *To identify a set of practices or tools used to overcome barriers in employee acceptance to change management*. The research has uncovered tactics employed to deal with resistance to change such as those towards actively:

- persuading negative individuals into accepting the change project
- reading body language to identify negative response to change
- using body language to break down barriers in a positive manner

These practices require skills to use effectively but can nonetheless be applied by capable management to influence employee behaviour towards the desired result.

## 5.5 Recommendations

In relation to the fourth objective; To provide a set of recommendations based on management practices to influence the soft aspects of change management.

Due to the complexity of the subject area, and the complementary disciplines of change management in behavioural psychology, leadership and organisational management, it is difficult to select and critic a single aspect of change management in analysing effectiveness. Taking this into consideration the researcher believes that tools for change management assessment are necessary for providing assessment of all the mentioned categories. Thus, developing a framework of tools for 'signal searching' would be recommended to accommodate a list of criteria determining change effectiveness in a cross-

sectional study. The reason for suggesting this is in relation to three aspects of management in practice which can be scrutinised:

- Self-analysis leaves room for bias
- Potential to miss or dismiss signals if management are unaware or disregard elements as useful
- Hiring a consultant to perform an effective review may not be practical in terms of financial and time resources of change implementation

The former is most practical in terms of time efficiency, while the second leaves room for error. The latter is an extra constraint on organisations which would ideally be removed.

Signal searching in the softer skill elements for analysing change effectiveness would include are based on the evidence found in the research findings:

- Body language
- Communication efficiency
- Skill development of employee's and active engagement in decision making

## 5.6 Limitations:

A limitation of the research, is that this case study with a cross-sectional review of change management, could be considered too small a window for meaningful change management influence. The qualitative results are based on a theme analysis of managerial perception of their own influence. As change occurs over time it would be more beneficial to provide this research in a longitudinal study format and include both manager and employee responses.

Another aspect of this study is the case study reviewing a single Irish organisation. A study performing research of change management in a larger number of Irish firms would give better insight into how change is perceived in an Irish setting.



## 5.7 Further research:

### 5.7.1 IRISH RESEARCH

As with most of the change management literature it is heavily influenced by American research. This can be seen in the literature which has origin in American studies and is popularly replicated in other countries for, primarily, comparative studies. To further develop the literature in an Irish setting the author suggests replicating the study to include a larger number of organisations to base findings on and discover further tools to assist change management and complement existing literature.

### 5.7.2 ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE AND CHANGE RECEPTIVENESS

The author also recommends a comparison of a similar study with a flattened organisational structure. As the findings elude to how communication structures in a flattened organisation allow for information to flow more efficiently, and also encourage more inquisitive nature from employees. This begs the researcher to consider:

- Is change management more effective in firms with flattened organisational structure?
- Should Irish firms adopt flattened organisation structure to increase change management receptiveness within the organisation?

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## 7 Appendices

## 7.1 Interview schedule

### Starter Questions

1. Have you had a chance to read the participant information document?
2. Are you aware of change management as a discipline?
  - a. If no, what about project management?
3. Do you have any change management or project management specific education?
4. Outside of formal education do you follow/read (change) management information sources? These can be from articles, books, listening to influencers on LinkedIn or YouTube, speakers who you may have seen in person.

### Interview Questions:

1. When introducing a change project to your team, how do you present it?
2. How do you go about creating a sense of urgency to build momentum towards a project or initiative?
3. How do you communicate change with your teams?
4. How do you motivate your teams towards accepting and utilising new software?
5. How do you identify and establish leadership within teams?
  - a. Statement: Qualitative analysis of technical project leaders acknowledged that it is no longer adequate to solely have technical capabilities. An understanding of softer human and behavioural skills is paramount in modern projects.
  - b. Would you class your leadership style as being task orientated or relationship orientated, or does it matter what orientation a project leader is?
6. “Keeping up with the speed of technology changes can be difficult, software as a service is a growing competitive industry”  
Question: Do you use education or training as a tool?
7. How do you account and plan for potential resistance to change?



## 7.2 Research request form

**TITLE OF THE STUDY:** Managements influence in implementing software applications in an Irish firm with employee acceptance to change management.

WHO I AM AND WHAT THIS STUDY IS ABOUT:

Hi,

I hope you're well.

As you may be aware, I am currently enrolled in an MSc in Management in the National College of Ireland. As part of my course, I must submit a dissertation in the field of 'Management'. Based on my current role, I have decided to research the concept of 'change management'.

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Don't hesitate to ask questions if anything you read is not clear or if you would like more information.

Over the past few months of research I have come across various literature demonstrating change management frameworks and the skills involved in change projects. I am researching management's influence on change projects in relation to employee's acceptance to change. The aspect of change management which I am interested is in relation to change implementation as a process, and how a leader's influence can help shape, for better or worse, the effectiveness of implementing a project or change process.

## WHAT WILL TAKING PART INVOLVE?

Taking part in the research will involve a 30-40-minute interview where you will be asked 6-8 questions in relation to the 'softer' aspects of a change project. There may be additional follow up questions during or immediately after the interview to expand on topics.

Interviews will take place in a meeting room in one of the following locations; Hume House, Frederick House, Baggot Plaza, at time that suits you. Alternatively, if you cannot arrange to meet in person a phone call can be arranged for the same duration of 30-40 minutes maximum. Interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed for qualitative analysis towards the dissertation.

My dissertation will be from an exploratory stance, trying to comprehend how different factors highlighted in change management frameworks are affecting modern management in Irish firms. The following topics refer to 'soft' (non-technical) aspects of managing change which will be covered in the interview are:

1. Change management initiatives towards software applications
2. Motivation for teams
3. Leadership styles, identifying leadership skills and perceptions
4. Resistance to change

## WHY HAVE YOU BEEN INVITED TO TAKE PART?

You have been invited to take part as you have been involved either directly or indirectly in implementing a change project in the business unit. You have

been elected on the basis of your experience and knowledge of change management and/or project management initiatives.

Please note the questions being asked in this interview will not be about the software application, focus will be on change management influences on teams and employees involved.

#### DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART?

Participation is voluntary, you do not have to accept this invitation. If you do accept, you may decline to answer any question(s) if you do not wish to do so and can withdraw from the research at any time without any consequence whatsoever.

#### WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS AND RISKS OF TAKING PART?

The research in this study is being completed based on a similar study which focused on teams and employee's perception on change phenomena influences from managers and team leaders during a change process. This research aims to provide a snapshot of a contrasting position from a managerial perspective to add to the current literature.

There are no perceived risks in taking part. Information collected is completely confidential as per the below section. However, if you do have any concerns please ask.

#### WILL TAKING PART BE CONFIDENTIAL?

Participation in this research will be confidential. Your name, position and the organisation will not be disclosed in the research. Any reference to an individual citing a theme or quote which may be used in the research will be anonymised for referencing. Likewise, if any names of individuals or organisations arise in the interview they will also be anonymised for confidentiality in transcripts.

## HOW WILL INFORMATION YOU PROVIDE BE RECORDED, STORED AND PROTECTED?

Signed consent forms, original audio recordings and transcripts will be retained in softcopy format in a secure location on a personal laptop. Files will be password protected and will not be accessible to anyone other than the researcher until after my degree has been conferred. A transcript of interviews in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for a further two years after this. Under freedom of information legalisation, you are entitled to access the information you have provided at any time.

## WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

The research undergone in this study will only be used for submitting a dissertation to the National College of Ireland. There is no other intended use for the data being collected in the interview.

## WHO SHOULD YOU CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION?

If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact me, the researcher, at [Kevin.Masterson@boi.com](mailto:Kevin.Masterson@boi.com). Alternatively, you can contact my supervisor at National College of Ireland [David.Hurley@ncirl.ie](mailto:David.Hurley@ncirl.ie).

If you would be willing, can you please confirm if you would be interested in participating so I can arrange a suitable half hour in your calendar?

THANK YOU

Kevin Masterson

### 7.3 Participant consent form

#### Dissertation Study Consent form:

**Study title:** Managements influence in implementing new technology applications in an Irish firm with employee acceptance to change management.

I..... voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves one 30-minute interview.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview audio recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in a secure location, until the exam board confirms my dissertation result. Once the result has been awarded, all related recordings and consent forms will be deleted/destroyed.
- I understand that under freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Researcher: Kevin Masterson  
Contact details: Kevin.Masterson@boi.com  
Academic Supervisor: David Hurley  
Contact details: [David.Hurley@ncirl.ie](mailto:David.Hurley@ncirl.ie)

X

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of research participant

X

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of researcher