

The Beckhard-Harris Change Model ($D \times V \times F > R$)

The Beckhard-Harris change model describes the conditions necessary for change to occur. The model specifies that organizations and individuals change when....

- There is DISSATISFACTION (D) with the current state (of whatever the focus of change might be), and,
- There is a clear and shared VISION (V) of a preferred future, and,
- There is an acceptable FIRST STEPS (F) Roadmap to achieving the Vision, and
- The product of $D \times V \times F$ is greater than the existing RESISTANCE to change among those whose support is required for successful implementation.

These conditions give rise to a change formula:

$$D \times V \times F > R$$

This change formula also implies that all three elements on the left side, Desire, Vision, and First Steps must be present for change to occur. If any element is missing, the product of multiplication is zero, which will always be less than the Resistance to change, which is always present to some degree.

DISSATISFACTION with the status quo

All change begins with (a) dissatisfaction with the current state based on a recognition that the pain of not changing is likely to be greater than the uncertainty of change, and, (b) a willingness to search for alternatives. The combination of these two elements creates desire for change. Organizational leaders should never take for granted that the rest of the enterprise will see the need for change as clearly as they do (see "the Marathon effect, below).

a VISION for change

When individuals or groups desire change, but cannot identify a "way out," the result is anger, depression, frustration, anxiety and/or apathy. Whatever the reaction, it is seldom positive. Mobilizing the energy generated by a desire for change requires a Vision. At its simplest, a shared vision is the answer to the question, "What do we want to create or achieve—together?"

Although it is not particularly important where in the organization the Vision originated, it is critical that the Vision be communicated in such a way that organizational members are encouraged -- not mandated -- to share the vision.

FIRST STEPS

While Dissatisfaction without Vision often leads to despair, Vision without Action is no more than a "castle in the air", a great idea without a roadmap. This too can create frustration and feelings of helplessness, feelings which often result in apathy and/or cynicism.

When engaging organizational members in the process of change, they must have the opportunity to describe their own reality, influence the shaping of a new vision for the future, and to participate in developing action plans (First Steps) for making the Vision a reality.

RESISTANCE to change

In order that the product of Desire, Vision and First Steps is greater than the Resistance to change, it is important to have a method of gauging the degree and nature of resistance.

Organizations do not resist change — people do. And although they resist change for highly personal reasons, there are some general principles. People resist change when they...

- believe they will lose something of value in the change (status, belonging, competence)
- lack trust in those promoting or driving the change
- feel they have insufficient knowledge about the proposed change and its implications;
- fear they will not be able to adapt to the change and will not have a place in the organization;
- believe the change is not in the best interests of the organization;
- believe they have been provided insufficient time to understand and commit to the change.

It's not that people resist change; it's just that they resist "being changed."

By far the most effective method of dealing with resistance is to engage stakeholders in shaping the elements on the left side of the change equation. By involving stakeholders in assessing the need for change (Dissatisfaction) creating a Vision of a preferred future, and determining First Steps toward achieving the vision, the system not only becomes richer in wisdom and passion, but many real or potential concerns about the change will be addressed.

DVF at two levels:

The preceding discussion suggests that, in every organizational change situation, stakeholders must experience Dissatisfaction, Vision and First steps at two distinct yet related levels:

- At the level of the whole change initiative; and
- At the level of the personal impact of the change.

These parallel change "streams" are illustrated below.

Requirements for System Change		
Acceptance of the need for organizational change	Understanding and acceptance of where the organization is headed	Understanding and acceptance of the plan for achieving the vision
Dissatisfaction	Vision	First Steps
Acceptance of the need for personal change in behaviour	understanding and acceptance of their new role and/or behaviour	understanding and acceptance of specific steps s/he must take to adopt new roles and behaviours
Requirements for Personal Change		

The Marathon Effect

Because leaders generally have the benefit of a broader view of the organization and its environment, they usually see the need for change much sooner than those lower in the organization. Being the responsible people that they are, they are likely to set about figuring out what changes are necessary, and even develop specific implementation plans. At this point the leader(s) will typically pass their plans down through the organization for action, and then express disappointment when events don't unfold as they had expected.

They have just experienced the “marathon effect.”

In a popular foot race like the Boston Marathon, there are so many participants that the first runners off the starting line may be racing a full 15-20 minutes before those at the back of the pack get to the start line. Those at the back may not even hear the starting gun, only recognizing that something is happening as they begin to sense anticipation and movement as the “race” gets closer to them.

Without the benefit of first-hand exposure to —or participation in— the sensing, analysis, thinking, deciding and planning of change, stakeholders lower in the organization are much less likely to accept or enthusiastically implement the leader's great plan.