

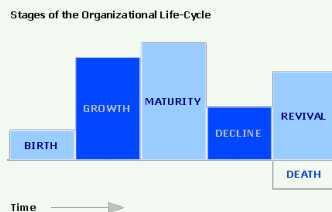
Introduction

Today's business world is highly competitive, thus change must be a naturally occurring activity in a growing organization. The way to survive is to reshape to the needs of a rapidly changing world. Resisting change is a dead-end street . . . for both the leader and the organization. Customers are not only demanding excellent service, they are also demanding more. If you do not supply it, your competitors will.

Organizations are reshaping themselves to become more agile and flat to meet their customers' needs. Top organization leaders know they cannot throw money at every problem and workers need to be highly committed and flexible.

Credit: <http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/leader/leadchg.html>

Organizational Life Cycle



Stages

Organizations normally go through four main changes throughout their growth (Klepper, 1997):

- **Formative Period** — This is when a new organization is just getting started. Although there is a founding vision (the purpose of the organization), there are no formal definitions. This is just as well because there should be a lot of experimentation and innovation taking place. These changes of creativity and discovery are needed to overcome obstacles and accomplish breakthroughs.
 - **Rapid Growth Period** — Direction and coordination are added to the organization to sustain growth and solidify gains. Change is focused on defining the purpose of the organization and on the mainstream business.
 - **Mature Period** — The strong growth curve levels off to the overall pace of the economy. Changes are needed to maintain established markets and assure maximum gains are achieved.
 - **Declining Period** — This is the rough ride. For some organizations, it means down-sizing and reorganization. To survive, changes must include tough objectives and compassionate implementation. The goal is to get out of the old and into something new. Success in this period means that the four periods start over again. Failure means the end of the organization is near.
- For some organizations the four periods of growth come and go very rapidly, for others, it may take decades. Failure to follow-through with the needed changes in any of the four growth periods means the death of the organization.

Change Acceptance

Throughout periods of changes, leaders need to concentrate on having their people transition from change avoidance to acceptance. Five steps accompanying change (Conner, 1993):

- **Denial:** Cannot foresee any major changes.
- **Anger:** Aversion at others for what they're putting me through.
- **Bargaining:** Working out solutions to keep everyone happy.
- **Depression:** Doubt and worry set in.
- **Acceptance:** Reality sets in, change or die.

Leaders Can Help

Leaders can help the change process by changing their employees' attitude from avoidance into acceptance. This is often best accomplished by changing avoidance questions and statements into acceptance questions. As a leader, you need to emphasize action to make the change as quickly and smoothly as possible.

Further Complications

Change is further complicated as it does not always produce a direct adjustment. Each employee's attitude produces a different response that is conditioned by feelings towards the change.

When change is introduced, each employee's personal history and social situation at work will produce a different attitude towards that change. You cannot see or measure attitudes, but what you can see and measure is the response towards that change:

Change + Personal experience (nurture) + Social situation (environment) = Attitude + Response

Although each person will have a different response to change (personal experience), they often show their attachment to the group (social situation at work) by joining in a uniform response to the change.

Despite each person wanting something different, such as place more demands, ignore the change, work harder, etc.; the need to belong to a group often sways individuals to follow a few individuals ("we are all in this together." Sometimes the response towards change is influenced mostly by personal experience, at other times it's swayed by the social situation.

Cycle of Acceptance



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