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**Total Quality Management and
Organisational Change**

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TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

While many contributors to the literature relating to Total Quality Management (TQM) provide in-depth cover relating to various facets of TQM, this working paper examines TQM in the broader context of organisational change.

In essence, putting TQM in place in an organisation involves movement and change. Broadly speaking, TQM can be viewed as an organisation-wide effort to improve quality through changes in structure, practices, systems and attitudes (Dale and Cooper 1992). Therefore an appreciation of the contours of organisational change is instructive when implementing a TQM programme. Ivancevich et al (1994:533) support this stance, commenting that 'bringing about a TQM change is difficult, but can be made easier by understanding resistance to change and how to overcome resistance'.

To begin the discussion and set the debate in its wider context, the nature of change in the contemporary world is touched on briefly. Following on from this, the impact of change on organisational life is presented. Next, TQM is factored into the discussion. The implementation of TQM is one of the responses adopted by organisations in their efforts to remain afloat in the sea of relentless competition which characterises the environment in which many now operate.

To get movement into any change process in an organisation, roadblocks arising from resistance to change have to be addressed. Why does this resistance arise, and what can be done to counter it? These questions are explored in some detail both at a general level and in the context of TQM.

OVERVIEW OF CHANGE

In his book *The Empty Raincoat*, Charles Handy observes that 'the world keeps changing. It is one of the paradoxes of success that the things and ways which got you where you are, are seldom the things to keep you there' (Handy 1994:49). While a detailed discourse on the nature of change is beyond the scope of this paper, a few observations on the subject are instructive in order to set organisational change in its broader societal framework. The well known observation of John Henry Cardinal Newman (1801 - 90) that 'to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have

changed often', although penned in the last century, seems very relevant to our contemporary world.

Baird et al (1990:252) comment that 'change pervades modern society and is happening at an ever-increasing rate'.

A broad interpretation of change in the modern world is presented by O'Murchu (1987). He cites some examples which highlight the vastly increased pace of change in recent times. For example, in 1950 over 40% of the world population lived under colonial control but the figure was reduced to only 1% by 1977. This has given rise to enormous political changes which have opened up commercial opportunities for many companies, e.g., in the former East Block countries. In the field of knowledge, whereas our quantity of knowledge doubled between 1600 and 1900, a period of 300 years, currently the quantity of information is duplicating every three years. The deep impact of this phenomenal change is captured by O'Murchu (1987:9): 'The most powerful waves of change in today's world take place at the broadest and deepest levels of our experience, creating a ripple effect in our social institutions and in our personal lives'.

Despite the high profile given to change in contemporary discussions, change itself is not a recent phenomenon. In their detailed account of *The Universe Story*, Swimme and Berry (1992) show how change is a recurring theme as they trace the long sequence of transformations of the universe over 15 billion years of existence from the initial flaring forth to the imminent Ecozoic era. Their narrative is one of constant change. Another early contributor to the debate, the Greek philosopher Heraclitus (536 - 470 BC), held that all things are in a state of continual flux and 'nothing is permanent but change' (quoted in Tripp 1976:74).

Although of necessity brief, this overview serves to establish the reality of change in both contemporary society and throughout history, the main difference over time being its accelerated pace in the modern world. Therefore it seems that 'we cannot block the flow of change. We may hold it at bay for a while but ultimately it waits for neither humanity nor its mighty institutions' (O'Murchu 1987:216). Change in organisations is but part of a wider pattern of change in the world at large.

CHANGE IN ORGANISATIONS

'Change is the order of the day. . . If there ever was a time when business-as-usual described the way businesses ran, that time has elapsed' (Webber 1988:4). Living as we do in a world that is characterised by rapid change, this reality is reflected in society's undertakings and institutions. Many contributors to the management debate have commented on the impact of change on organisational life which is necessitated by the turbulent and demanding environments in which they operate. 'The 1980s have witnessed an unprecedented emphasis on changing organizations to make them more responsive to today's highly competitive and uncertain conditions' (Cummings and Huse 1989:xi). Contrasting the earlier stable organisational world of the 1950s and the 1960s with the current reality, Daft and Lengel (1994:59) are of the opinion that 'today's companies and their environments are more similar to the weather than to the precise assembly-line systems typical of Newtonian thinking'. Faced with the reality of this unpredictability, 'to survive and grow, organizations must change with the environment' (Baird et al 1990:261).

Somewhat earlier, in a time of relative stability, solutions to organisational problems seemed more attainable, but the increasing complexity of contemporary challenges has made their resolution more difficult. Gray and Starke (1988:589) capture this progression rather well:

It used to be that the field was replete with simplistic, prescriptive formulae designed to give managers an off-the-shelf approach to change. Today, however, it has become one of the most complex areas in the field of organizational behaviour.

The reality is that 'in a rapidly changing world, past solutions have little to offer the future' (Garratt 1987:21). The experience of Finbarr Flood, recently retired MD of Guinness Dublin, endorses this point.: 'The whole world was changing. In the old days the product seemed to sell itself and the money poured in. It was now a much more commercial and competitive world and things had to change' (O'Dea 1994:56). Therefore Morgan's (1993:xxvii) comment that today 'a capacity to flow with change is becoming a key requirement' seems firmly grounded in reality. The views of another observer, Bennett (1991:211) , are broadly in agreement: 'Change is inevitable: the problem is how best to harness change and use its consequences for the benefit of the organisation'.

One approach being adopted by organisations as they strive to renew themselves in response to environmental turbulence is to adopt TQM as a system of management. In order to achieve this transition to TQM, 'there must be changes in attitudes, communication, employee involvement and commitment' (Ivancevich et al 1994:533), in other words, organisational change. Before reviewing the contributions in the literature on the subject of the change process in organisations, a brief overview of TQM is presented to show its connectedness with the 'organisational change' debate.

A BRIEF REVIEW OF TQM

Total Quality Management (TQM) is featured widely in the current academic literature both as a main theme, e.g., Bounds et al (1995); Joss and Kogan (1995); Macdonald and Piggott (1990); Oakland (1989), and as part of general management, e.g., Daft (1995); Gatewood et al (1995); Griffin (1996); Ivancevich et al (1994); Stahl (1995). Bounds et al (1994:2-3) capture the complexity that surrounds TQM:

Total Quality Management (TQM) is a hot subject in business and academic circles. Business managers are fervently trying to figure out how to do it, while academicians are trying to determine what it is. None of them completely agree upon either the definition of TQM or how to put the concept into practice.

This lack of clarity is not surprising when it is taken into account that TQM 'is not a fixed body of truths, but a process that is evolving' (Macdonald and Piggott 1990:92). Its roots go back to the 'quality revolution' which took place in Japan from the early 1950s onwards and was instigated by two Americans, Deming and Juran (Macdonald and Piggott 1990). Shunned by American business leaders, this duo found fertile soil for their ideas in an economy intent on rebuilding itself, following the devastation of World War II (Gatewood et al 1995).

Joss and Kogan (1995) track developments in the field of quality from the early days of quality control, followed by quality assurance and culminating in the present day conception as TQM. These authors also note the progressive use of TQM from its origins in private sector manufacturing to the commercial services sector and them, relatively recently, to the public sector. To circumvent the acknowledged difficulties

that surround the definition of quality, Joss and Kogan (1995:13) suggest that the features of TQM can be summed up in the following definition:

TQM is an integrated, corporately led programme of organizational change designed to engender and sustain a culture of continuous improvement based on customer-oriented definitions of quality.

The centrality of organisational change in the implementation of TQM is highlighted in this definition.

While the principles of TQM maybe easy to embrace, moving to the pragmatic stage can give rise to challenges. Somewhat earlier, Philip Crosby (1979), one of the founders of the TQM movement, argued that over 90% of TQM initiatives fail. More recently, Gareth Morgan (1996) estimated that over 70% are unsuccessful . These statistics are indicative of a rather dismal record for TQM in practice. They endorse Egan's (1988a:68) assertion that 'quality is easy to espouse but may be difficult to deliver consistently'. It seems that there is ample scope for improvement in operationalising TQM. As implementation of TQM involves organisational change (Joss and Kogan 1995), the next part of discussion focuses on this change process.

It is considered that a broad understanding of change in an organisational context, including resistance to change and how to counter it, can provide insights into how TQM can be implemented more successfully. It must be appreciated by practitioners and academics alike that 'no solution, however perfectly it may address the critical issue, can be of the slightest benefit until it is implemented' (Ohmae 1982:21). As mentioned already, the available evidence to date points to considerable problems with TQM when it comes to putting it into practice (Crosby 1979; Joss and Kogan 1995; Morgan 1996).

RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

It has been stated that 'the three certain things in life are death, taxes and resistance to change' (Egan 1988b:13). In an organisational context some resistance to change 'is concentrated enough that it stops change dead in its tracks' (Ivancevich et al 1994:527). Why does this resistance arise? The insights gained by the industrial psychologist James Fisher from his work as a company executive and consultant shed some light on the intransigence that can arise. He notes that 'while technical

systems change rapidly, the systems that govern our social behaviour have evolved little in 2,000 years' (Fisher 1996:68).

In the introduction to his book *Imaginization* (Morgan 1993), Gareth Morgan asserts that 'an organization has no presence beyond that of the people who bring it to life', indicating the critical importance of people's behaviour in organisations in the quest for change. Cummings and Huse (1989:111) note the obstacles that can arise: 'Change can generate deep resistances in people and in organizations, making it difficult if not impossible to implement organizational improvements'. In addition to unwillingness arising from the general workforce, Garratt (1987:46) highlights problems associated with specialists and their perspectives on moving to new ways:

Many specialists are trained to exclude areas of knowledge, skills and attitudes throughout their training and professional life so that the idea of accepting and valuing areas previously excluded is a difficult one and liable to be rejected unless handled carefully.

A more concrete example of specialist focus is provided by Joss and Kogan (1995) in the context of TQM in the NHS in England. These researchers report as follows:

Prior to the start of TQM many of our interviewees reported that there was an over-reliance on the professional and medical models of patient care rather than a more holistic understanding of *total* patient care . . . Patients were often treated as passive by nurses and doctors who were more task-oriented than patient oriented

(Joss and Kogan 1995:76)

So far in the discussion it has been shown that resistance to change in organisations, both at general and specialist levels, can pose problems when trying to get new methods adopted. To ameliorate this rather bleak outlook regarding making changes, it is worth noting that 'people do not resist all change, only change that they do not understand or that they see as psychologically or economically threatening' (Baird et al 1990:261). Concurring with this view, Gray and Starke (1988:575) comment that 'not all changes are resisted'. These authors suggest that as 'people have a natural instinct to adapt to their environment', resistance arises in reaction to a particular situation rather than emanating from a built-in response to

change (Gray and Starke 1988:575). In order to effect change, managers need to understand the source of this resistance.

Before moving on to explore specific areas where resistance can arise, it is useful to look at the issue from a broader perspective. One starting point is to distinguish between rational and emotional resistance to change (Gray and Starke 1988).

Rational resistance is associated with lack of knowledge or information and can be addressed by providing the necessary facts about the proposed change. Humphreys (1996:1) provides some broad insights into the emotional needs of people:

The primary need of people in our culture is to be loved, recognised, valued and accepted. Any threat to that emotional and social need poses great danger for people and so it is not surprising that, just as for physical threats, creative protections are developed to reduce or eliminate risks to emotional and social well-being.

The author also identified the workplace as one of the locations where these threats can arise. It is important to remember that 'emotional resistance cannot be overcome with rational solutions' (Gray and Starke 1988:576) as it is encountered usually when logic and reason fail to reduce resistance.

In the context of problem-solving in an organisation, Garratt (1987) argues that two inputs are needed (i) a technical content side and (ii) a social-emotional input which provides the 'lubrication' for (i). He comments that 'without the social-emotional side being consciously managed, the problem-solving process overheats and seizes up' (Garratt 1987:102).

With these general observations in place, it is now timely to review some of the more specific sources of resistance to change which are highlighted in the literature by many scholars including Argyris (1995), Bennett (1991), Cummings and Huse (1989), Daft (1995), Egan (1988b), Gray and Starke (1988), Ivancevich et al (1994) and Kanter (1984). Analysing the various perspectives put forward by the cohort of contributors to this debate, the following broad areas emerge as underpinning resistance to change in organisations:

- Self interest
- Fear
- Group pressures
- Inertia.

Each facet is now examined.

Self interest

'Employees typically resist a change they believe will take away something of value' (Daft 1995:280). The perceived loss may relate to economic well-being, e.g., some people may fear losing their jobs or employees may just not know the economic outcome of a proposed change (Humphreys 1996). Loss of status can be another concern in times of change. Gray and Starke (1988:577) comment that 'changes in social systems almost always affect the status of people' and consider that any change resulting in reduced status for an individual or group of individuals will be resisted.

Fear:

Uncertainty is one of the outcomes of change (Kanter 1984). This, in turn, can lead to fear of failure as people are faced with learning new ways. The psychological security associated with tried and tested ways is removed, leading to a perceived loss of predictability (Gray and Starke 1988). Unless these fears are acknowledged and addressed, resistance to the proposed change may ensue.

Group pressure:

Pressure to resist change may come from peers (Ivancevich et al 1994). The strong influence of group norms was well established a long time ago in Elton Mayo's Hawthorn studies (Pugh et al 1983) and this reality must be taken into account when effecting change.

Inertia:

The refrain: 'This is how we've done it for years' captures the type of resistance to change built in by the traditional rules, policies and procedures in many large organisations (Ivancevich et al 1994). 'Inertia, aided and abetted by the day-to-day running of the corporation' is cited by Egan (1988b:13) as a main cause of change

efforts failing to bear fruit. He counsels that 'wise agents, whether consultants, managers or others, accept inertia as a fact of organizational life' (Egan 1988b:13).

It has been shown that self interest, fear, group pressure and inertia may all conspire to impede the path of change. Therefore, what can be done to ameliorate their impact?

RESPONSES TO RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

Force-field Analysis, developed by the distinguished psychologist Kurt Lewin, can be a useful tool for broadly analysing change situations. Despite the rather lofty title, it is conceptually straightforward. Lewin (1951) proposed that change ensued from the competition between driving and restraining forces. In other words, when a change is instigated, some forces drive and facilitate it while others create resistance to it. The required change can be achieved by decreasing the restraining forces and increasing the facilitating forces. Egan (1988b) provides some systematic steps in the use of Force-field Analysis at the transition stage of change:

- List all the restraining forces, i.e., obstacles to change
- List all the facilitating forces - persons, places, things, trends
- Underline the forces in each list that seem most critical
- Identify strategies for taking appropriate action on those identified.

A note of caution is sounded by Herbert (1976) regarding the possible strategy of merely increasing the driving forces. He refers to the 'coiled spring effect' (Herbert 1976:345) in this strategy, i.e., just as increased resistance is encountered when pushing downward on a coiled spring, likewise only applying more pressure to change may result in merely increasing the resistance. Bearing in mind this possibility, the choice of a balanced approach, paying attention to both restraining and driving forces (Egan 1988b), seems necessary in order to progress change.

While Force-field Analysis provides general insights into effecting change, in addition some more specific tactics for overcoming employee resistance can be effective. Numerous scholars, including Bennett (1991), Daft (1995), Egan (1988b), Kirkpatrick (1985), Kotter and Schlesinger (1979) and Nutt (1986), have recommendations to offering this area. Possible approaches suggested include:

- Communication and education
- Participation and involvement
- Facilitation and support
- Negotiation
- Coercion.

The contours of these tactics are now explored.

Communication and education:

The aim here is to make employees aware of all aspects of the proposed changes and to convince them that such changes are necessary. 'Communication and education are used when solid information about the change is needed by users and other who may resist implementation' (Daft 1995:282). Enid Mumford, whose current interest is in development of tools and methods to facilitate change, stresses the need for excellent communication, noting that . . .

it is very important and the Achilles heel of so many projects. Good communication is an essential component in successful change . . . All stakeholders need to understand, accept and approve of proposed major change and this requires comprehension and continuing communication to all who will be affected

(McGill 1996:52)

Despite the rather obvious need for communication, it seems that, at times, organisations can be remiss in this regard. For instance, Jones (1996:16) comments that 'organisations and individuals sometimes try to make change by stealth'. To endorse his point, Jones recounts how a group of managers adopted Tom Peter's idea of managing by wandering around (MBWA). Initially this was done without informing staff who, having been left in the dark about the change, began to worry about what was happening. However, once it was explained, staff had the opportunity to offer support and encouragement to the initiative. Therefore communication was an important tool in solving this particular uncertainty.

In a recent position paper, the Irish employers' body IBEC stresses the need for direct communication with staff, particularly in creating a climate of continuous improvement. It expresses the view that 'communicating with employees should not

be a difficult, complicated or contentious process. However, there is evidence that it often is' (*Business & Finance* 1996:35). Plant (1987) identifies a particular problem area in communication, especially in larger organisations. He labels it the 'soggy sponge' of middle management which often prevents effective communication in either direction as messages are distorted if not blocked. By putting mechanisms in place to facilitate upward feedback, Plant suggests that this 'soggy sponge' can be penetrated.

In sum, whereas effective communication is a requirement for bringing about change, there is evidence to suggest that in the 'real' world of organisations it does not get all the attention it merits.

Education is seen as another method of countering resistance to change. In the context of incorporating TQM, Joss and Kogan (1995) identify some of the common causes of less than successful TQM initiatives and stress the need for education:

Few commercial organizations start out with a full understanding of just how much education and training a successful TQM initiative requires. Many appear to think that a two-day customer awareness programme followed by tools and techniques training for a handful of facilitators is sufficient. . . It is not unusual to find training for the whole workforce taking two years from the start of implementation.

(Joss and Kogan 1995:111)

This suggests that there is no 'quick fix' where education for change is concerned. Yet, if this educational input is omitted, there is a great danger that employees will be unprepared to meet the challenges of the proposed innovations and therefore may resist them.

Participation and involvement:

When endeavouring to bring about change, the received wisdom suggests that involvement of employees is important. Smith (1995:19) reports that 'most management theorists support the notion that successful change requires participation' while Kanter (1983) considers that people at all levels in the organisation need to be 'change masters'. By allowing potential resisters to participate in designing change, they are enabled to understand it and become

committed to it (Bennett 1991; Daft 1995; Gray and Starke 1988). In fact if people have a strong need for involvement, the very process of participation can be motivating, leading to a greater effort to make changes work (Cummings and Molloy 1977). The motivational effect of participation is also mentioned by Smith (1995) when he describes some of the positive outcomes of staff involvement:

By seeking input from those at the coal face, leaders will have better information, make better decisions and, by involving staff, have more motivated staff. People like to feel they can contribute to their own destiny, if not control it.

Yet, despite the perceived merits of participation, Mumford is of the view that 'sadly, participation is often viewed as a luxury. However we neglect it at our peril' (McGill 1996:52).

Facilitation and support:

The visible support of top management helps to overcome resistance to change (Daft 1995) as such support indicates firmly to employees that the change is important for the organisation. IBEC, the Irish employers' body, says that management support is widely recognised as being the key to success of continuous improvement (*Business & Finance* 1996). In the context of TQM, Ivancevich et al (1994:535) emphasise that 'the commitment to TQM must come from the top'.

To be supportive, a manager needs to show concern for subordinates, be a good listener, and facilitate change when fear and anxiety fuel resistance (Ivancevich et al 1994). When employees feel that those managing change are genuinely interested in their feelings and perceptions, they are likely to be less defensive and more willing to share their concerns and fears (Kirkpatrick 1985).

Negotiation:

This is a more formal means of achieving cooperation, involving formal bargaining to gain acceptance of change (Daft 1995). Resistance to change can be reduced through negotiation. In essence, a negotiated agreement works by giving something to another party in order to reduce resistance (Ivancevich et al 1994).

Coercion:

Using this approach, formal power is used in order to reduce resistance to change. Coercion can be explicit or implicit, but both involve managers using threatening behaviour. Employees can be threatened with job loss or loss of privileges (Humphreys 1996). Whereas such tactics may reduce employee resistance in the short run, there is a danger that it may create a more permanent climate of hostility and therefore is less appealing in the longer term.

Drawing together this discussion on the various methods that have been put forward to counter resistance to change, it must be borne in mind that just as the sources of resistance are numerous so too are the possible solutions to counteracting this reluctance to embrace new ways. However, being aware of the range of tools available to reduce resistance to change should help managers to 'peel the onion' in order to 'move to progressively deeper levels of understanding' (Morgan 1993:309) about this complex issue

SUMMARY AND FINAL REFLECTIONS

This working paper has explored TQM in the context of organisational change. The main discussion began by taking a brief look at change, firstly, at a broad societal pitch and then at organisational level. It was established that the current pressure for change in organisations is a concomitant of rapid change in society. The reality is that economic, political and technological changes, coupled with intense global competition, all converge to confound the operating environments of many undertakings and institutions. In response to these environmental challenges, TQM has been developed as a system of management and is now a significant factor in global competitive positioning (Stahl 1995:).

While a precise definition of TQM remains elusive, it can be said that quality, customers and continuous improvement are key themes of this new paradigm.

To be effective, TQM has to be operationalised in organisations and this involves change. Here, as elsewhere, 'practice is always more complicated - and more interesting - than theory' (Mintzberg, quoted in Duncan et al 1995:71).

Disappointingly high failure rates have been quoted for TQM initiatives (Crosby 1979; Morgan 1996), indicating that attempts to bring TQM to full fruition in an organisation can be problematic. An appreciation of the causes underpinning resistance to

change and methods to seek their resolution should provide insights regarding best practice in bringing about new initiatives in undertakings, including TQM.

The review of organisational change presented highlights its complex nature. It is suggested in the literature that resistance to change, with both rational and emotional underpinnings, can stem from a combination of factors including self interest, fear, group pressure and inertia. Possible means of countering this reluctance to move to new ways centre around communication, participation and facilitation, with negotiation and coercion as other options.

The intricate web of forces in the organisational change process explains why implementing change can give rise to difficulties. Yet, despite the challenges that have to be surmounted in the process, Joss and Kogan (1995:111) observe that 'the culture in many Western companies has been to look for quick fixes of all kinds'. Given the complex reality of achieving change, a 'quick fix' approach to implementing new organisational initiatives, including TQM, does not hold out much hope of meeting with success. The patient path, as portrayed by Bounds et al (1994:43) seems more apposite:

It can take a long time to change habits. The shift cannot be made all at once. Managers must learn new ways of thinking and acting. Then they have to practice these new ways and discover for themselves what works or does not work.

It must be remembered that, in the final analysis, '*people* make things happen in companies and institutions'(Egan 1988a:46) and 'organizations need brain and heart' (Garratt 1987:134).

Endorsing this point, Ovretveit (1990::75) comments that 'successful quality programmes pay as much attention to changing human relationships . . . as to introducing new systems. . . Tools are only used if people want to use them'. In order to be implemented effectively, a TQM initiative needs to involve 'the whole organisation, every department, every activity, every single person at every level' (Oakland 1989:14). This process takes time and effort and it seems that there are no short cuts.

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