

Thomas Lauer

Change Management

Fundamentals and Success Factors

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*Dedicated to my doctoral supervisor
Prof. Dr. Hermann Schnabl!*

Preface to the Third Edition

Since the publication of the first edition in 2010, the relevance of the topic of change management has further increased. I am pleased that the previous two editions of my book on the subject have followed this trend and have also become more widely distributed. As I know from reader feedback, the book is used in the practice of change management as well as in the context of courses at colleges and universities.

With this third edition I would like to maintain the proven structure. Accordingly, I have mainly made additions and updates. Topics that have now been included in the book for the first time are, for example, stakeholder analysis (see Sect. [8.3.3](#)), the use of the social intranet for communication and idea generation (see Sects. [8.3.2](#) and [14.3.3](#)), or intrapreneurship programs as a source of permanent change (see Sect. [14.3.4](#)). In addition, a whole series of new case studies were integrated and the more recent literature on the topic was reviewed and, where appropriate, taken into account.

I hope that all readers will enjoy and gain insight from the reading!

Aschaffenburg, Germany
January 2019

Thomas Lauer

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Part I

Fundamentals



Change Management: The Path to Achieve the Goal

1

Change is increasingly determining the day-to-day business of a company. In order to optimally control it, special management techniques are required, which can be summarized under the term change management. The human factor is at the forefront of all considerations, because the implementation of change is dependent on the active support of the employees. As everyone has their own needs, ideas and experiences, some of which do not conform to the established corporate structure, there can be no simple recipe for how to successfully manage change. Rather, it is a complex undertaking that must start at three points: the affected individuals, the corporate structures and the corporate culture.

This book is aimed primarily at managers of all hierarchy levels who are entrusted with the task of managing change. However, it is also suitable as a textbook for practice-oriented studies, as it deals with the basics of change management (Part I) and analyzes the practical success factors for change (Part II).

1.1 Change Management: What It Means

1.1.1 Definition

The only constant is change, it is commonly said. This is undoubtedly and increasingly true for the business world—and thus also for the individual companies that play a central role in it. Buzzwords that may emphasize the omnipresence of the changes surrounding companies include climate change, globalization, and above all, digitization. It is therefore hardly surprising that management practice and its academic training are increasingly addressing these issues. The term has become established for the special management techniques required to control these processes involved in change.

As Fig. 1.1 shows, change management is about achieving an optimal design of the path from the starting point (symbolized here by a wire chair) to the goal (symbolized by a comfortable upholstered armchair). In this understanding of the term, change management does not include the definition of the content of the goal itself, nor the development of methods to derive such goals or corporate strategies. Even if a 100% separation between the path and the goal is not possible, as will become apparent later, especially under the keyword of *participation*, the focus is clearly on designing the path to the goal and not on the application of methods and procedures of strategic goal planning. Change management is therefore, in contrast to strategic corporate management, which seeks optimal adaptation to the environment, a task that is primarily directed inward, that is, toward the members of the organization or company undergoing change. The aim is to internally implement the optimal adaptation to external changes derived from strategic management. It is pointless to speculate whether ultimately the finding of an optimal strategy or its implementation represents the greater challenge. The fact is, however, that only the combination of both ultimately leads to the goal of sustainable corporate success. Consequently, a suitable strategy is a necessary but not yet sufficient condition for success.

In the past, the emphasis of management theory was rather on teaching methods for strategy development. In contrast the implementation inside the company, the necessary change itself, was often understood as an automatism, which did not seem necessary to take a closer look. Practice has shown that this is often where the real challenge lurks. This is probably due to the fact that the implementation of change is not a purely mechanical process, but requires the active support of employees and thus of people who have their own needs, ideas, experiences, emotions, characters, etc., and who are also embedded in social structures that are not only defined by the formal, official company organization, but have often grown informally, quasi “wildly”. In such a complex field of action, there can be no simple recipes for how to successfully manage change, but it requires playing on a similarly multi-layered repertoire of methods or management techniques. This often includes, not least of all, a change in attitude regarding the self-image of managers who are only too happy to see themselves in the role of the autonomous designer who “sets his pieces on the chessboard”. However, as these pieces in reality have a life of their own and move around by themselves even without strategists, change management is not only a social technique but ultimately also a specific philosophy of corporate management, as is increasingly required in complex, dynamic corporate environments. The recognition of the existence of employees as independent, acting beings does not primarily stem from humanitarian reasons, but aims primarily at increasing economic efficiency. A study of 111 German-speaking companies by the International Institute for Learning Organization and Innovation at the University of St. Gallen (Internationales Institut für lernende Organization und Innovation an der Hochschule St. Gallen) has shown that taking into account not only the factual but also the relational level in the context of change reduces costs by about 25% and the time required by about 16%.¹

¹See Kostka and Mönch (2002, p. 13).

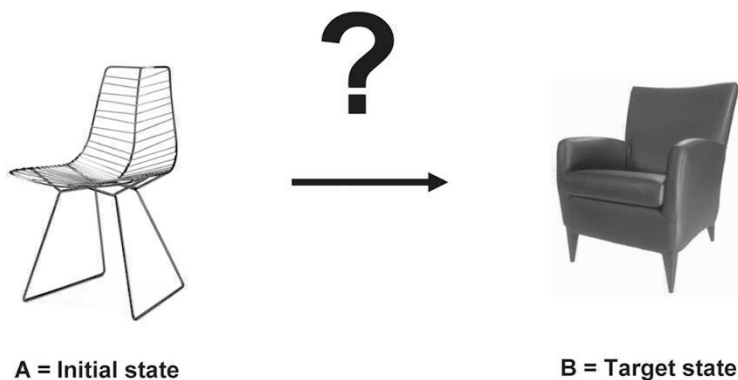


Fig. 1.1 Change management as the management of change on the path from A to B

The number of companies that consider change management as an important or very important task in the future is approaching the 100% mark. This statement is supported by various studies. For example, a survey by a consortium of several universities and colleges among more than 200 human resource management experts using the Delphi method showed that “accompaniment of change processes” is number one in the ranking with regard to personnel development instruments of the future,² followed by coaching, which will be mentioned in the context of success factors (see Sect. 11.3.2). A study by the consulting firm Kienbaum from 2017 confirms this trend. When asked about the most important topics of future top management training courses, change management also took first place by a clear margin.³

These are enough reasons to take a comprehensive look at the field of change management.

1.1.2 Subject

As shown in the previous discussion, change management is generally concerned with the optimal management of corporate change. This can be proactively initiated in order to successfully tackle future challenges, such as mergers and acquisitions, or—as is often the case—it can arise from an immediate reaction to crisis phenomena. Even though most of the following examples in this book overall refer to companies, change management should not be too strictly linked with *corporate change*. On the one hand, the findings and methods presented here are equally applicable to non-commercial organizations, such as aid organizations, state and municipal institutions or universities, which also have to face

²See Schermuly and Nachtwei (2012, p. 38).

³See Kienbaum (2017, p. 14).

constant changes in their environment.⁴ On the other hand, although the change of the entire company is the most outwardly visible sign of change, in practice the individual components of companies, such as divisions, departments, production facilities, etc., are constantly changing without this having to be accompanied by an overall changed corporate strategy. The described foundations and success factors of change are also valid for the change on a small scale. Only the dimension of the methods has to be adapted from case to case.

Examples of such processes of change on both large and small scale are

- The takeover of a company by an investor, for example, a private equity fund or a company successor, such as the next generation of the owner family.⁵
- The complete reorganization of a company, for example in the form of a division into business segments representing customer groups (business vs. private customers) or product segments.
- The outsourcing of organizational units through sales or outsourcing activities.
- The reorganization of individual functional areas of the company, such as the re-cutting of sales territories, the transformation of the human resources department into a service center or the centralization of purchasing.
- The introduction of new technologies and processes in the field of communication, for example through a social intranet (see Sect. 8.3.2), customer management (in the form of a CRM system⁶), Industry 4.0 applications or within the scope of a new product launch.⁷
- The change or the first-time implementation of methods or rules that primarily affect the personnel. Examples here would be the change of a remuneration system toward greater variability,⁸ the first-time implementation of an employee survey or even “only” the move to a new building.

1.1.3 Starting Points for Change Management

Since change management primarily refers to the management of change by taking the human factor into account, the associated methods can primarily be applied to three points (see Fig. 1.2).

⁴See e.g., Resch and Day (2010).

⁵On change management in the context of corporate succession, also see Ritter et al. (2014).

⁶See e.g., Helmke et al. (2013, p. 278 ff.).

⁷See e.g., Lies et al. (2011, p. 101 f.).

⁸See e.g., (Kanning 2012, p. 109 ff.).

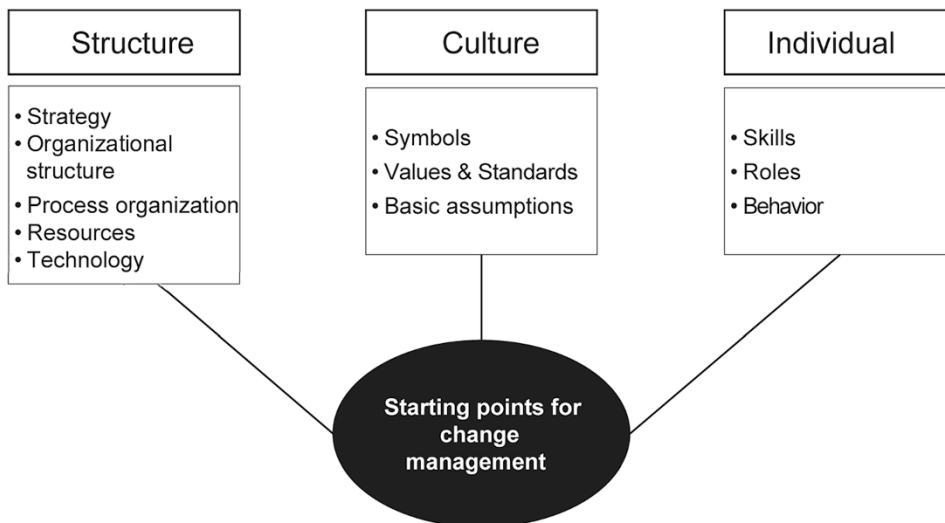


Fig. 1.2 Starting points for change management [Source: Based on Staehle (1999, p. 934) and Kostka and Mönch (2002, p. 16)]

1. *Individuals*: They form the smallest social elements of organizations. Without their active participation, change in companies is not possible. Change management in relation to individuals means not only adapting skills to new challenges, but also promoting the necessary positive attitude toward the goals of change and participation in it.
2. *Corporate structures*: They include the formal structural and process organization as well as strategies and resources. Their change is basically simple on paper, but the informal structures, which tend to develop over the long term and through evolution, often resist these changes.
3. *Corporate culture*: These permanent, rather informal structures, which are responsible for attitudes, values, and informal rules of behavior, are called corporate culture and are largely independent of the individual. A change only on an individual and structural level without the involvement of the corporate culture is often fraught with considerable problems or even doomed to complete failure.

The fact that these three levels are generally to be addressed together can be illustrated clearly by the transformations of former state authorities into private sector companies, as has been the case, for example, in the postal, telecommunications or rail transport sectors of many countries.

Take the example of the German railway company Deutsche Bahn. The transformation into a private company is initially accompanied by an adjustment of strategy. It is no longer just security of supply, but rather the generation of profits that moves to the top of the list of objectives. In strategic terms, this means aligning with the market and customer needs. As a

result, service employees are required to be more customer-oriented. The customers are no longer applicants but guarantors for the well-being of the company and thus also for the company's individual future. Service staff must therefore acquire new skills for customer dialogue at the counter or on the train. However, knowledge and skills are not sufficient here. At the same time, the attitude toward the customer and one's own profession may have to be modified. A "civil servant mentality" must be discarded and exchanged for a service orientation. However, this will only be possible on a mass scale if the entire environment of colleagues and managers accepts and lives by these new rules, and if the corporate culture as a whole shifts in this way from an official culture geared to safety and error prevention to a service culture.

Change management is therefore a complex task that not only starts at different levels, but also has to constructively bring together the most diverse interests of those involved. For this, knowledge of the possible causes of the failure of change is just as important as knowledge of the many success factors that contribute to its success.

1.2 Objective and Target Group of the Book

1.2.1 Objective

With the importance of change management in practice, the number of publications on this topic has undoubtedly increased. However, a review of these publications reveals that the majority of them only shed light on certain aspects of change management, depending on whether the authors come from the psychological and social sciences or the business management profession. In particular, individual methods or elements are presented very explicitly and in a manner close to implementation, but the holistic view of this extremely complex topic is rather secondary. On the other hand, other publications on this topic, especially in the field of academic literature, approach the subject primarily from a theoretical, abstract level, which limits its immediate practical use. In accordance with this starting point, the present book is guided by the following objectives:

1. *Providing a comprehensive overview:* The following chapters are intended to examine the topic of change management in its entirety. This includes the socio-scientific-psychological aspects as well as the business management aspects. It encompasses the identification of the causes and necessities of change management to the same extent as the understanding of problems that arise and methods for their solution. The unifying element of all the contents is the development of a general change management model (see Chap. 5), as it is systematically derived from the basic chapters and in turn serves to determine the success factors presented subsequently.
2. *Structured presentation of the contents:* Although it is highly recommended to study the entire book chapter by chapter, it can also be used as a reference book or manual. The division into the sections, fundamentals, and success factors helps to find answers to

specific questions in the context of change management processes, as the generally structured or numbered listing of related reasons, arguments, factors, etc.

3. *Offering a practical guide:* Despite its claim to provide a comprehensive overview, the main purpose of the book is to provide practical support for change management. The structure of the book and its chapters is intended to help here, as is the presentation of selected methods, the provision of practical tips or the offer of practical checks on the change management skills of the organization or organizational unit to be changed. Last but not the least, the illustration with numerous practical examples, which are presented as insertions at the appropriate places in the book, shows the way to the optimal management of change.

1.2.2 Target Group

In line with the book's objectives as explained above, it is primarily aimed at managers in companies or other organizations who are responsible for managing change. This concerns the top management initiating change to the same extent as project managers in the individual sub-areas of change, or middle management who either want to transform the sub-areas of the company for which they are responsible on a small scale, or who are responsible for a concrete form of change for the respective areas within the framework of a complete corporate change.

As the subject change management is increasingly being incorporated into academic curricula, this book can also serve as a basis for courses at universities and colleges, provided that the teaching is practice-oriented.

1.3 Structure of the Book

The book is divided into two parts, fundamentals (Chaps. 1–5) and success factors (Chaps. 6–14). The structuring is based on five guiding questions (see Fig. 1.3).

1. *What is change management?* This question, which was discussed at the beginning of this chapter, serves above all as a precise demarcation from other areas of corporate management, primarily strategic management.
2. *What causes the need for corporate change?* Even though change management itself starts with the process control of change and does not define the objectives of change in terms of content, it is important to understand what triggers change and why the importance of corporate change will probably continue to increase in the future. Not only does insight into the significance of change require an examination of the causes, but its respective course can also be different depending on whether the change was triggered by internal developments or external influences.

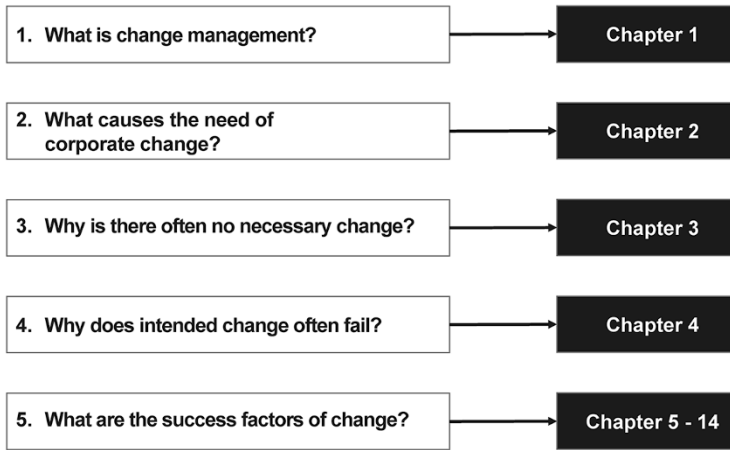


Fig. 1.3 Five key questions of the present book with the corresponding chapters

3. *Why does the necessary change often fail to materialize?* As shown in the corresponding Chap. 3, the necessary change is often delayed in practice, or in the worst case, does not take place at all. Change management therefore cannot start with the design of the change itself, but must also show prerequisites for recognizing the necessity of change and implementing it in appropriate action.
4. *Why does intended change often fail?* Even if change is initiated in time, its implementation in practice is often accompanied by considerable difficulties, up to the complete failure of the project. Understanding the causes of these problems is of utmost importance in order to identify the right and important success factors and also to understand why they are important. In this respect, this question points directly to the final and decisive fifth question.
5. *What are the success factors of change?* Identifying the aspects and techniques that are crucial for successful change determines the second and more comprehensive part of the book. These success factors are almost always treated according to an identical scheme, which is intended to facilitate orientation when reading. This scheme includes:
 - (a) An explanation of what is meant by the particular success factor (term);
 - (b) Showing the contribution(s) to success by considering the factor;
 - (c) Specifying the conditions that must be met for the factor to have its full effect;
 - (d) The presentation of selected methods that can be applied at the appropriate point in the context of change;
 - (e) Giving practical tips for implementation, or in many cases, offering a practical check to determine the status quo with regard to the respective success factor.

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The need for corporate change can be caused both externally and internally. Externally, companies are faced with an increasingly dynamic environment that requires constant adaptation of their own structures if they want to be successful in the sales markets, but also in the preceding procurement markets. External change is caused by the market environment, politics, technology, ecology, the economy as a whole or institutions, as well as in the markets themselves, for example through increasing competition. To explain internal change, the metaphor of human development is used, which—like corporate development—is characterized by a sequence of growth, crisis and higher maturity. So-called life cycle models for explaining the ongoing maturity process of companies exist, which show the typical development phases as examples. However, change is often necessary because companies often overstretch the straightforward spirit of their efforts when they are successful. Here, too, the reference to the human psyche is established and this phenomenon is analogously referred to as “burn-out.”

2.1 Externally Triggered Change

2.1.1 Companies as Open Systems

If one asks about the triggers of external corporate change, it makes sense to make an excursus to systems theory, which generally considers systems and their exchange with the environment.

A system basically has two components, elements and their relationships to each other.¹ There is a more or less open border to the environment of the system. Companies are now

¹See Reimann et al. (1985, pp. 158 ff.).