Change Management through Productive Social Networking

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Abstract*: The study identifies the forces of changes in today's turbulent industrial scenario dominated by technology and diverse workforce. It explores the concept of change management with the insights on "Productive Social Networking" within the organizations. The study proposes the model of agile organisation based on constructive social networking and e-learning. Also, 'Sustainability requirements' is identified as the major driving force for strategic agility in response to changes. The model explains the role of productive social networking in fostering creativity and innovation among employees and employee groups. It also focuses on the requirement of agility in human resources or talent to have creative solutions in the direction of sustainable development. The study proposes concept of agile change management with appropriate use of technology.*

Key words: *productive social networking, agile human resources, agile change management,*

I.   Introduction

In 21st Century, Organisations are surrounded by information technology that affects how they are designed and managed. In today's workplace, many employees work on computers only and many work on virtual teams also. Employees and employee groups are electronically connected to colleagues, partners around the world. It requires leaders to be not only tech-savvy but also be responsible for managing web of relationships that reaches far beyond the boundaries of the physical organization. The opportunity and challenge of building a flexible link between a company , its employees, vendors, customers. Further, growing workforce diversity has brought variety of challenges in front of the organizations. The challenges include maintaining a corporate culture, balancing work and quality of life, coping with cultural conflicts, etc.

Uncertainty in the macro-environment is the matter of challenge for any organization. The two important aspects of this uncertainty are –i) Information about the environment and   ii) Resources available in the environment . The dynamic market conditions of complexity and the continuous change demands a greater need to collect the information and orgaisational response based on that information.

In the new business ecosystems, managers have learnt to work in more horizontal process rather than vertical hierarchical structures. Important initiatives are not top down, rather they are formed in the every corner of the organization and also cut across the boundaries of the organization. Leaders must learn to utilize the technology for scanning the environment, opportunities and build up strong and sustainable relationships with multiple stakeholders.

II.   Literature Review

In Today's turbulent economic conditions, every organization has to change and innovate to survive. Organisations like Sony Corporation, Toyota, Nokia, Samsung are searching for any innovation edge to leapfrog and grow. Change management includes anticipation of forces of change, application of change management tools, feedback and improvements.

According to John P Kotter, major forces driving the need for change are Technology change, Inernational economic integration , Maturation of markets in developed countries and fall of communist and socialist regimes. Kotter further classified large scale changes as structure changes, Strategic changes, Culture changes, ERP and quality programs. Joseph McCann listed that four types of changes provide the strategic competitive advantage to the organisations. The four types mentioned by McCann are Technology, Product & Services, Strategy and Structure and Culture. If we look into the history of how changes occur we need to review the classification according to the scope i.e Incremental changes and radical changes.

Stephen Robbins have classified sources of resistance to change as i) Individual sources and ii) Organisational sources. Individual resistance includes habits, need of security, economic factors, and fear of unknown and selective information processing. Organisational level resistance includes group inertia, structural inertia, threat to expertise and threat to resource allocation group.

Kurt lewin's three step model and Kotter's eight step plan have been the great contributors to the change management. John P. Kotter has focused on creating an urgency for change with a compelling reason and further the model requires sequential approach viz. the planning , communication, execution, recognition and reinforcement for change.

III. Identification of forces driving the change:

Globalisation, rapid expansion of information technology, diversified work cultures and environmental damages and concerns have shifted the assumptions of change management. These four factors are used to identify the major driving forces of change and are as follows.

i) Sustainable development requirements – Environmental concerns are geared up and go green movement is on. Every organization has to focus on alternative means for raw material , processes, etc for eco-friendly products throughout their life cycle. This requires continual innovation in product and processes.

ii) Quality of Work life requirements – the world is on the route of 'back to the basics'. Every employee (from any cultural background) want to work and earn but they want a stress free and joyful, creative working climate which will value human values.

iii) Technology– Directions of technology is changing. In the first phase technology was introduced in the process and products. In the second phase it was used in resource planning and allocation and the third phase is productive sharing and communication. The third stage is not matured yet. Technology is also affecting social intelligence of the population.

iv) Global Economy– The dimensions of global economy are changing. BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) is upcoming as a world market and dominant economies as well.

IV. Challenges for the Organisations:

In view of the above dynamic driving forces organizations today are facing following challenges
i) Product innovation and new product development

ii) Nurturing innovation in the organization

iii) Acquisition of the most relevant technology

iv) Differentiation and positioning of the products as per emerging market dynamics.

v) Retention of the talent and succession planning

vi) Position itself as an accepted social entity

V. Creating an agile organization
5.1 Elements of agile organization:

Agile organization can be defined as an open system having multidirectional productive information & knowledge sharing structure that can cope up with changes occurring into the micro and macro environment with continual improvement in products, services and working climate.
The elements of the agile organization are:

i) Multi-directional information system among stakeholders

ii) Diverse workforce

iii) Innovation as a strongest motive.

iv) continuous learning and continual improvement

v) Recognition process for talent

vi) Effective succession planning

5.2 Productive social networking for change management
A primary motive of information technology today is to support efforts of knowledge management. Businesses today measure their value in terms of intellectual capital. To change and innovate continuously, organizations must create, share, transfer knowledge across the stakeholders. Use of ERP , e-business, CRM and further concept of integrated enterprise are the vital steps in development of productive use of Information technology. However the employee perception of these systems/ concepts is a issue of debate and most of the times these are perceived imposed initiatives by Top Management.

If we scan the social and political changes across the world today, the major role is played by IT and especially Social networking. Though the organizational dynamics is totally different, the constructive application of social networking within an organization including vendors and customers (being major stakeholders)may prove as a better platform for creating an agile organization having the most innovative and satisfied workforce. The way in which social networking is introduced and perceived by leaders will be the vital aspect here. Also, its applications / elements shall be introduced gradually to make employees feel comfortable while sharing the knowledge and ideas.

5.2.1. Model for productive social networking
The 3 phase model is proposed here with :
a) First Phase- Creating and starting social networking platform in Organisation

open ideas will be shared on this platform. Managers will be informed and motivated for making social networking popular among employees.

Efforts from leaders and managers would include wishing employees on special occasion, practicing online open door policy, putting organization;s profile for SWOT analysis by all the stakeholders.

b) Second phase will start from creating specific communities / groups having some of the employee as group mentors or coordinators. Ideas of group formation would come from employees and no Top-down will be used.

In second phase, employees would be focusing on particular group dicscussions, idea modifications and idea recommendations. The role of managers here is to motivate employees to make pilot testing of ideas or taking vote on ideas and implement.

c) Third phase would involve broad base implementation of fully evolved ideas and recognition of the contributors to the idea. It would also involve opening of sharing with customers and vendors.
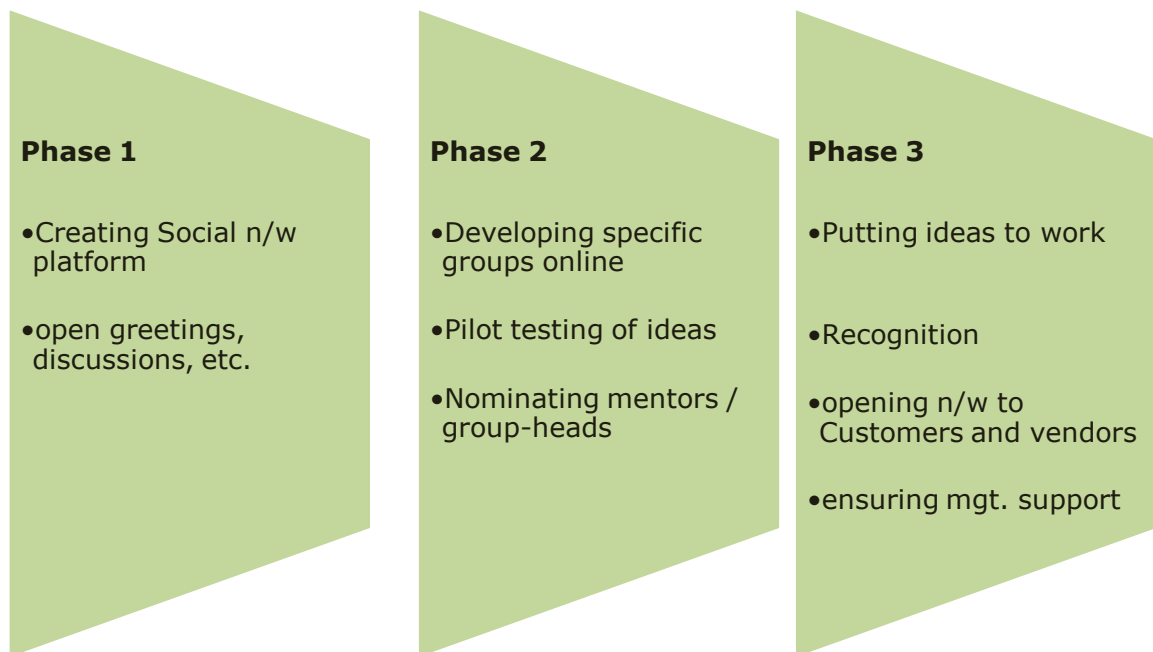
Phase 1

•Creating Social n/w platform

•open greetings, discussions, etc.

Phase 2

•Developing specific groups online

•Pilot testing of ideas

•Nominating mentors / group-heads

Phase 3

•Putting ideas to work

•Recognition

•opening n/w to Customers and vendors

•ensuring mgt. support

Fig1.Step-wise Implementation of Productive Social Networking platform

5.2.2. Sustaining the productivity of Social Networking

Continuous recognition and management support in terms of resources will be required for maintaining the positive outcomes of social networking. After some days/ months of creation of social networking, the employees will start contributing in positive manner. It will continue to contribute to the central objective of the organizations only if the employees will feel motivated and bright ideas need to be rewarded for the same. Acceptance direction of ideas will also convey the management intention and it will foster innovation and creativity in a constructive manner. In the long run, talent will be valued, employees will be satisfied and organization as a whole become more fluid with continuous inputs on every aspect of business functions, work life and quality of life. This will create an agile organization where changes will not introduced with top-down approach. Rather changes will be identified by employees themselves in advance and implementation will also happen in a multi-directional approach as if sugar gets dissolved in the water. Employees and employee groups would be churning ideas and solutions to problems. This will be a continuous process which will surely be able to nurture and retain the talent.

5.2.3. Benefits of productive Social Networking

i) Creation of energetic, transparent and lively learning organization.

ii) Realistic talent development and management.

iii) Sustainable innovative culture development.

iv) Better quality of work life and more retention period.

v) Creatively and actively dealing with sustainable development requirements.

vi) Indirect and dynamic training need identification.

vii) Agility and Strength out of lean culture.

VI.   Conclusion

The proposed model of agile organization for agile change management will not encounter the traditional resistance patterns as employee involvement is the central theme. It will create a learning and innovative organization which will work on inputs from all directions and filtering of the inputs and ideas will also be done by the employees on the social network itself. Further the major change requirement today is the efforts for sustainable development and motivating employees for the same. The organizations would also be able to identify the training needs from the area of interest of employees. The agile organization with agile and motivated talent groups would be able to develop new alternatives for products and processes. It will enhance the creativity of the employee groups which will ultimately result into better business and enhanced quality of work life.

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