

## **The Challenges of Dealing with Strategic Change Management at Taifa Cables and Retreads Limited**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This paper examines the challenges of leadership, workforce, communication and training and how they affect strategic change management within an organization. The study was carried out in Mombasa and it targeted a population of 51 employees of a tyre retreading firm. A census of all the 51 employees was conducted. Quantitative data from the study was analyzed using content analysis approach. The results indicated that communication and training were major issues to the implementation of strategic change management within the organization due to lack of an effective communication strategy and lack of a well articulated training and development program, while leadership and workforce challenges were not. The study recommended the establishment of requisite training and development programs as well as the necessary communication strategies and policies to tackle the challenges.*

**Keywords:** *Change Management, Training, Communication, Workforce, Leadership, Strategic Change Management, Strategy.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The tyre retreading industry is a major manufacturing sub sector of the whole tyre industry that is very sensitive to both internal and external environmental changes. In order to remain competitive the sub sector must adapt to changes and be proactive enough to lead change while tackling environmental challenges. Of paramount importance being the creation of conditions that make proactive change a way of life (Rukumba, 2003). While it is true that most organization appreciate the benefits that accompany change, many of them lack a solid understanding of what change management is and how to implement change management tactics (Conner, 1999).

Organizations are open systems that operate in an environment that carries with it a myriad of challenges. For them to deliver efficiently they must appreciate these changes. The principle aim of change management is to change individuals, team, organization as well as the societies so as to usher in a shift from the status quo to a desired future. Strategic change is triggered by the need for organizations to exploit existing and emerging opportunities while at the same time dealing with threats. According to Handy (1994) managing strategic change is about addressing the unfolding non linear processes during strategy implementation. It comprises of change or alignment or re-alignment of policy, systems, styles, values, staff and skills of an organization to realize strategy.

With the key focus being the implementation of the performance management program at Taifa Cables and Retreads Limited there could be a general neglect on the dynamics of personal and organizational change that will determine the outcome of any change effort. As the result there is a failure to address the management need to coach the employees through the transition process of change. Subsequently there will be failure to acknowledge the fact that the management itself, needs to acquire skills on change management before they can effectively implement change within the organization. Channels of communication need to be improved and presented to all the employees to be aware of how to access and relay information. Change champions should have been created or appointed to lead this process, and finally the employees input and the reaction to this program should have been sought for in an all inclusive process to follow and for them to own it.

### *1.1 Statement of the Problem*

The problem at Taifa Cables & Retreads Limited therefore is that of strategic change management implementation. Change management is a functional area of management that is hardly known or appreciated by most managers. It follows therefore that skills required to effectively manage change are lacking.

In Kenya, few studies have been conducted on managing strategic change. Otiso (2008) did a case study of Africa Merchant Assurance Company (AMACO), Bwibo (2000) studied Non-Governmental Organizations in Kenya, and Sikasa (2004) carried out a study on customer perception of change management practices at Housing Finance Corporation of Kenya (HFCK). Maingi (2005) studied strategic change management in Kenya while; Mbogo (2003) conducted a study of change management at Kenya Commercial Bank Limited. However, very little is on record highlighting management of strategic change in the tyre retreading sub-sector of the manufacturing industry in Kenya under which Taifa Cables & Retreads Limited falls. This constitutes a research gap that this study seeks to fill.

Although it is argued by Carnall (1995) that there is no universal formula for managing change authors such as Burnes (2009), Hill and Jones (1992) and Kotter (1996) recommended that the change programs should be planned against a set of objectives, strategies and a clear process and that the use of

frameworks or models help managers to address issues in a logical order. In addition, Nadler and Tushman (1999) claimed that it is essential to identify and evaluate the type and characteristics of any change situation if the case and its implications are to be understood clearly.

### *1.2 Research Questions*

- How does leadership challenge affect the management of strategic change?
- How does the workforce challenge influence management of strategic change?
- How does communication challenge affect the management of strategic change?
- How does training challenge influence strategic change management?

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Strategic change is the actions, processes and decisions that are executed by an organization's members to realize their strategic intentions (Handy, 1994). It involves managing the unfolding non-linear dynamic processes during strategic implementation. Strategic change is long term by nature and affects the entire organization, and is aimed at achieving efficiency. As the external and internal environment changes, organizations need also to change their strategies in order to achieve a strategic fit (Thompson and Strickland, 2003). Neither strategy nor change management would be of any special consideration if products and markets were stable and organizational change was rare (Burnes, 2009).

That change is feature that cannot be avoided due to its continued presence in all its ramifications is something that cannot be overemphasized. Burns (2009) adds that the way in which such changes are managed and the appropriateness of the approach adopted, have crucial implications for the way people experience change and perception of the eventual result. Organizations are faced with an unrelenting stream of pressure from global competition, social and demographic trends, shifts in government policy, legal and political events and streams of new inventions in the technological world. It is worth therefore appreciating that organizations can, and do experience severe challenges in managing change.

Change management has been defined as 'the process of continually renewing an organization's direction, structure, and capabilities to serve the ever-changing needs of external and internal customers' (Moran & Brightman, 2001). According to Burnes (2009) change is an ever-present feature of organizational life, both at operational and strategic level. Therefore should be no doubt regarding the importance to any organization of its ability to identify where it needs to be in the future, and how to manage the changes required getting there. Consequently organizational change cannot be separated from organizational strategy, or vice versa (Burnes, 2009; Rieley & Clarkson, 2001). Due to the importance of organization change, its management is becoming a highly required managerial skill (Senior, 2002). Graetz (2000) goes as far as suggesting 'Against a backdrop of increasing globalization, deregulation, the rapid pace of technological innovation, growing knowledge workforce, and shifting social and demographic trends, few would dispute that the primary task for management today is the leadership of organizational change.'

To effectively adapt to change, most established organizations have a daunting task ahead of them in a variety of operational and procedural areas. Business must be redefined and redesigned and adapted to specific geographical and cultural settings. The workforce needs to be retrained to be ready for changes in how the work is done, what skills and knowledge is needed, and how to relate to global collaborators and customers. The very culture of an organization needs to be reshaped to properly support

the new processes introduced. Structures, rewards systems, appraisal measurements and the roles need redefinition (Bainbridge, 1996). Leadership styles and management procedures must shift and adapt, and ways of relating with customers, suppliers, and other stakeholders need refining. Technological advances and capabilities must be introduced, and preparation of the workforce to work with the new information technology structures is needed.

Leadership is about changing the organization culture from a knowledge hoarding culture to a knowledge sharing one, and transforming the organization into a learning organization (Harrington, 2004). It should recognize the difference between managing and leading, i.e. leadership is transformational and focused on coping with change, establishing direction and vision and introducing change. Effective leaders must be able to execute their plans and policies. They should cultivate effective teams and recognize when to switch leadership style to maintain team momentum. Leaders must prepare and be ready for change. Leaders must plan strategically in order to guide the organization to a successful future, and to avoid the risk of being overcome by the impact of change. Planning for and embracing change must be an on-going process.

Communication is a critical issue in any aspect of corporate life. This is even more accurate in times of great organizational change. Effective communications must be recognized as the vital component for organizational change (Kotter, 1996; Mainelli, 1996). Communication is often discussed as a factor that determines the attitude towards change. For instance, Armenakis, Harris and Mossholder (1993) argue that readiness for change can be created through effective communication of the message for change. A study by Chawla and Kelloway (2004) showed that openness to change is directly and indirectly influenced by communication. Many studies have investigated the extent to which information and communication decrease uncertainty about change (e.g., Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Kramer, Dougherty & Pierce, 2004). Finally, communication has been presented as a strategy for dealing with resistance to change (Kirkpatrick, 1985).

Change has become an everyday part of organizational dynamics; employees who resist change can actually cripple an organization (Bolognese, 2002). In other words employee resistance to change has been identified as a critical contributor to the failure of many well-intended and well conceived efforts to initiate change within the organization (Dent & Goldenberg, 1999). Individuals naturally rush to defend the status quo if they feel their security or status is threatened. Folger & Skarlicki (1999) argue that organizational change can generate skepticism and resistance in employees, making it sometimes difficult or impossible to implement organizational improvements. In a study, Kegan and Lahey (2001) show that aggression and frustration in employees are some of the emotional factors that cause undesirable behaviors and resistance to change.

Training is crucial for organizational development and success. It is fruitful to both employers and employees of an organization. An employee will become more efficient and productive if he is trained well. Training is beneficial as: it improves morale of employees through employee job security and job satisfaction. The more satisfied the employee is and the greater is his morale, the more he will contribute to organizational success and lesser will be employee absenteeism and turnover; Less supervision is required for a well trained workforce as they will be well acquainted with the job. Thus, there will be less wastage of time and efforts; fewer accidents experienced - Errors are likely to occur if the employees lack knowledge and skills required for doing a particular job. The more trained an employee is, the less are the chances of committing accidents in job and the more proficient the employee

becomes; Chances of promotion advanced as employees acquire skills and efficiency during training. They become more eligible for promotion, thus they become an asset for the organization; increased productivity as training improves efficiency and productivity of employees. Well trained employees show both quality and quantity performance. There is less wastage of time, money and resources if employees are properly trained.

In summary, organizations must develop the necessary infrastructure to plan, implement and sustain their respective change strategies. Furthermore, a clearly articulated and communicated vision can provide a real focus for the organization and a rallying point for employees. There are no doubt that leadership plays a critical role in both initiating and sustaining the change management process. Leaders play a critical role as change agents in the transformation process. Successful change efforts necessitate the leader to articulate a compelling vision that appeals to both internal and external stakeholders; communicate a sense of urgency, lead by example, show strong personal commitment and enable stakeholders to contribute to their full potential. Successful change management, therefore, requires the organization to overcome several leadership challenges, and to develop a focused and proactive strategy to address change. It is only when employees truly understand the need for change, the direction set, and are actively engaged in the process that successful change can happen. Finally, successful management of change should be viewed not as a one-time event, but rather as a continuous way of doing business (Price and Chahal, 2005).

### *2.1 Conceptual Framework*

As illustrated in figure 1, this study adopted a conceptual framework where leadership, workforce, communication and training were itemized as independent variables and strategic change management was itemized as the dependent variable.

## **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study was carried out in Mombasa, using a case study research design. The target population was 51 employees of Taifa Cables and Retreads Limited, a tyre retreading and cables manufacturing company. Due to the small population size a census study was considered prudent, consisting of all the 51 employees of the company comprising of managers, supervisors and operative staff formed the respondents of the study. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data. The questions were on a five point Likert scale. The data obtained was entered, cleaned and coded in Excel program. The content analysis approach was used to analyze and interpret the information.

## **4. RESULTS OF THE STUDY**

### *4.1 Personal Information*

Majority of the respondents were male (90%), were aged below 40 years (83%) which would mean that most employees could just be using their positions as a stepping stone to better opportunities elsewhere and that the work involved is mainly menial, involving lots of stamina. Most of the respondents (57%) possessed secondary level education which implies that they could undergo training on issues appertaining change management. The general staff consisted of 66.7%, being the majority due to the nature of work involved in the organization. 77% of respondents worked for the organization for more than 5 years implying that the employees have less job opportunities outside for frequent shifts.

#### *4.2 Leadership Challenge*

Majority (62.3%) of the respondents both strongly agreed or agreed that leadership is influential in determining the dealings of strategic management changes within the organization (Table 1), and that by agreeing to this fact it means that the respondents do not view leadership challenge as an issue of concern in their organization. Leadership is viewed as having a positive impact and plays its role in the change process within the organization

#### *4.3 Communication Challenge*

Table 2 indicates the response to communication challenge within the organization under study. It shows that a majority, that is, 50.6% of respondents disagreed with the statements, while 32.6% agreed with the statements. This is an indication that communication challenge affects the organization. 54% disagreed that there is any effective communication strategy while 76% disagreed that junior staff are allowed to contribute opinions on change process.

#### *4.4 Workforce Challenge*

Majority of the respondents (53.3%) affirmed that workforce challenge does not affect the organization (Table 3). 22% were neutral, whereas 24.8% strongly disagreed or disagreed to this fact. 44% and 40% of respondents were neutral on the issues of change politics being sorted and effects of changes on one part of the organization affecting the others is handled respectively.

#### *4.5 Training Challenge*

Table 4 shows that majority (55.7%) of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the positive statements on training challenge within the organization. As far as training for the current job within the organization is concerned 60% strongly disagreed and disagreed that they have been trained by their organization for the current position while majority, 54% disagreed or strongly disagreed to being trained for future jobs.

### **5. CONCLUSION**

Based on the research findings, the study concluded that communication and training challenges are the main problems affecting management of strategic change within the organization under study. This is evident from the respondents' answers to the majority in disagreeing to the positive questions posed on the issues. It has been realized that lack of a clear communication strategy, lack of proper feedback mechanisms and poor policies on employees' participation in the change process are the major reasons for communication challenge affecting it. As for the workforce challenge, the study found that it is not a major challenge as majority of the respondents agreed that the organization does not resist change, it introduces enough new policies and procedures to deal with emerging changes, and the organization has the ability and willingness to change. Due to the lack of well defined training and development programs, no investments in staff training and a general lack of identification of change agents to facilitate the change process, is the main reason for the training challenge affecting the organization.

It is worth noting that for the leadership challenge the respondents answered unanimously to the affirmative, but when comparing the same figures for the workforce challenge, organizational politics and impact of changes affecting one part of the organization having an effect on another pose challenges in their own way as the answers are neutral to the majority of the respondents. This indicates a lack of

communication on the part of leadership to allay employee fears and concerns on the same. The organization should align its vision and mission to the various strategic change processes. For instance leadership should be trained in better leadership skills, especially in strategic change management process so that they can better formulate impressive strategic plans and see to their successful implementation. More emphasis should be put on transformational leadership competencies rather than on management. Furthermore, the use of change leaders should be encouraged in terms of consultants and well trained managers to spearhead the change processes.

As far as communication challenge is concerned there is urgent need to formulate a clear and effective communication strategy and policy which must be followed in any strategic change management process. Clear monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be established for constant feedback and follow through inertia. Employees should be allowed to give their opinions and feedback on the processes as this will enable management to adjust their processes accordingly and thus avoid resource wastage. Clear goals and objectives need to be formulated with relevant targets and timelines. Together with this, the employees need to be offered reasonable rewards for their efforts in fulfilling the targets and objectives successfully. The importance of the HR department cannot be overemphasized here as it is the one that keeps a record of the employees' activities throughout the entire work process. The HR department should provide appropriate training manuals and schedules, reward mechanisms, motivational schemes, as well as social mechanism to allow the employees to be heard. Regular meetings and networking within sections and departments to discuss progress and give feedback will definitely improve understanding between employees and enhance the various change efforts affecting them.

Findings on the workforce challenge reveal certain recommendations to avoid resistance and allow for compliance and acceptance of the change management. Politics within the organization involving the change process needs to be handled effectively by creating all inclusive deliberation mechanisms in case such cases arise. Communication still plays a crucial role in creating understanding and avoiding resistance by employees on the change efforts being implied. Various support mechanisms need to be established to deal with employee grievances and they need to know and understand that their issues can always be solved successfully by the leadership in the organization. Offering opportunities for job rotations, promotions, salary reviews and many other job enhancing and motivational tactics need to be introduced in order to give morale to the employees.

Training challenge has posed the most difficult in dealing with change management at Taifa Cables & Retreads Limited. In order to motivate employees there is need to formulate appropriate training and development curriculums which are aligned to the vision and mission of the organization and as far as strategic change management is concerned. It is true that training is regarded as very important in improving performance and morale. This should be a continuous process as skills and knowledge needs to be sharpened always. On the other hand the organization needs to invest in hiring well trained staff when initially acquiring new employees for specific positions. Any knowledge based organization needs to constantly renew itself technologically, and also in terms of equipping its workforce with the relevant skills and knowledge to adopt the new technologies and systems of work. There are many benefits to training employees including improving performance and productivity, improving morale and motivation, and reducing all sorts of wastages associated with lack of training.

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**FIGURES & TABLES**

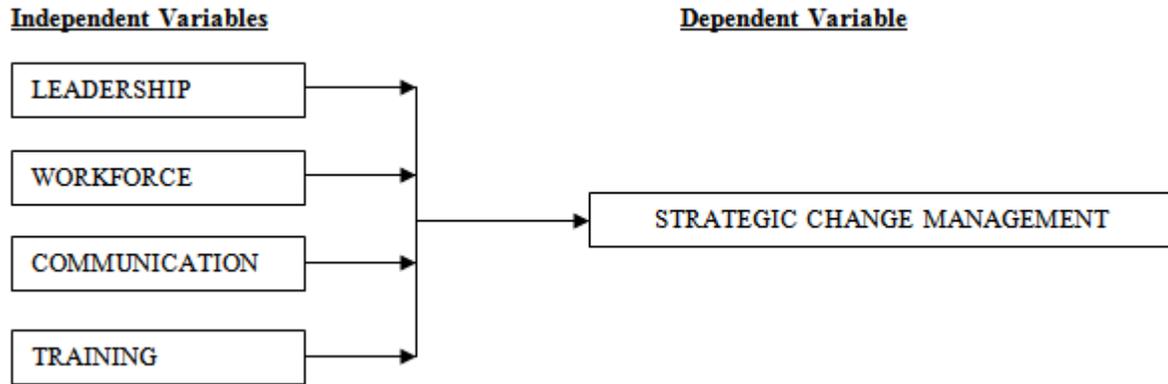


Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework

**Table 1: Response to leadership challenge**

Extent of agreement	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	Fq	%	Fq	%	Fq	%	Fq	%	Fq	%
Supervisor is supportive of my efforts	15	30.0	32	64.0	3	6.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Leadership norms assists organizational progress	0	0.0	27	54.0	14	28.0	9	18.0	0	0.0
Leadership efforts result to fulfill organization purpose	0	0.0	28	56.0	8	16.0	12	24.0	2	4.0
My work unit structure is well designed	1	2.0	24	48.0	10	20.0	15	30.0	0	0.0
I understand my supervisor's efforts to influence me and the other members of the work unit	8	16.0	40	80.0	2	4.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Executives understand and are committed to fulfilling their roles in the change process	2	4.0	18	36.0	15	30.0	12	24.0	3	6.0
Leaders model the required behavior resulting from changes	3	6.0	20	40.0	10	20.0	14	28.0	3	6.0
<b>Average</b>		<b>8.3%</b>		<b>54.0%</b>		<b>17.7%</b>		<b>17.7%</b>		<b>2.3%</b>

**Table 2: Response to communication challenge**

Extent of agreement	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	Fq	%	Fq	%	Fq	%	Fq	%	Fq	%
There is clear understanding of the pressure for change	5	10.0	20	40.0	3	6.0	22	44.0	0	0.0
There are clear objectives outlined for the change outcomes	2	4.0	20	40.0	12	24.0	15	30.0	1	2.0
There is proper feedback on change process	0	0.0	13	26.0	13	26.0	21	42.0	3	6.0
This organization has an effective communication strategy during the change process	0	0.0	10	20.0	13	26.0	25	50.0	2	4.0
Leaders reinforce the importance and goals of the change at every opportunity	2	4.0	25	50.0	8	16.0	13	26.0	2	4.0
This organization allows for junior staff to contribute to opinions on change process.	2	4.0	5	10.0	5	10.0	32	64.0	6	12.0
I deliberately resist the changes in the organization	2	4.0	8	16.0	5	10.0	25	50.0	10	20.0
<b>Average</b>		<b>3.7%</b>		<b>28.9%</b>		<b>16.9%</b>		<b>43.7%</b>		<b>6.9%</b>

**Table 3: Response to workforce challenge**

Extent of agreement	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	Fq	%	Fq	%	Fq	%	Fq	%	Fq	%
This organization is not resistant to change	2	4.0	25	50.0	5	10.0	17	34.0	1	2.0
This organization introduces enough new policies and procedures	0	0.0	32	64.0	7	14.0	10	20.0	1	2.0
This organization favors change	0	0.0	26	52.0	13	26.0	8	16.0	3	6.0
Occasionally I like to change things about my job	10	20.0	34	68.0	3	6.0	3	6.0	0	0.0
This organization has the ability to change	15	30.0	32	64.0	3	6.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Politics associated with change is effectively managed	2	4.0	8	16.0	22	44.0	15	30.0	3	6.0
The impact of changes in one part of the organization on the other parts of the organization are recognized and holistically managed	2	4.0	15	30.0	20	40.0	13	26.0	0	0.0
The organization provides employees with support for coping with changes.	2	4.0	8	16.0	15	30.0	22	44.0	3	6.0
Average		<b>8.3%</b>		<b>45.0%</b>		<b>22.0%</b>		<b>22.0%</b>		<b>2.8%</b>

**Table 4: Response to training challenge**

Extent of agreement	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	Fq	%	Fq	%	Fq	%	Fq	%	Fq	%
Training is a way to improve performance	13	26.0	27	54.0	0	0.0	7	14.0	3	6.0
The organization has well defined training and development programs for the employees	2	4.0	10	20.0	3	6.0	28	56.0	7	14.0
I have real opportunity to improve my skills in this organization	2	4.0	23	46.0	7	14.0	13	26.0	5	10.0
I have been well trained by this organization for my current job	3	6.0	15	30.0	2	4.0	28	56.0	2	4.0
This organization has trained me well for potential future Jobs	5	10.0	13	26.0	5	10.0	22	44.0	5	10.0
This organization invests in staff learning and development	0	0.0	5	10.0	3	6.0	32	64.0	10	20.0
Change agents have been identified and trained to facilitate the change processes	2	4.0	7	14.0	8	16.0	22	44.0	11	22.0
<b>Average</b>		<b>7.7%</b>		<b>28.6%</b>		<b>8.0%</b>		<b>43.4%</b>		<b>12.3%</b>