

Applied Leadership and Management in the Workplace

Module Assignment Submission

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Introduction

BT Group is one of the UK's biggest communication organisations and operates in a sector that is experiencing continued technological, economic, and competitive change. Developments such as artificial intelligence, automation, full-fibre networks, and changing customer expectations are affecting how BT operates, and the skills required from its workforce. At the same time, economic conditions, regulation, and competition are creating further challenges for the organisation (BT Group plc, 2026).

This report critically analyses the current forces for change with BT's macro and microenvironments and considers how these can affect workplace culture and capability. PESTLE and SWOT analysis are used to examine the wider environment, while the microenvironment considers competitors, customers, employees, and business partners. The report then evaluates how BT's stakeholders can be led through complex workplace change. And Kotter's 8-step change model and Lewin's Change Model are applied to BT's transformation to consider the role of leadership, communication, employee involvement, and organisational culture in supporting successful change.

Critically Analyse the Current Forces for Change in The Organisations Micro and Macro Environment That Can Impact Workplace Culture and Capability

The Macro Environment

Organisations are affected by factors outside of their direct control, which can create challenges for change, these factors are often described as the macro environment and include economic, technological, political, legal, social, and environmental influences (OpenStax, 2022). PESTLE is a useful framework for examining these external pressures because it considers how changes can affect an organisation and the way it operates. This is particularly relevant to BT because the telecommunications industry is changing due to recent technology, competition, regulation, and customer expectations.

Economic Factors

The economic environment can affect BT's performance and decisions about investment, costs, and its workforce. GlobalData reports that UK real GDP growth was 0.9% in 2025, compared with 1.1% in 2024, while inflation was 3.0% in 2025. Growth is forecast to increase to 1.3% in 2026, with inflation expected to fall to 2.4% (GlobalData, 2025).

Although the economic outlook is expected to improve, businesses still must manage their costs and customer spending. This relates to BT because the company needs to continue investing in its network and technology while also keeping costs under

control. (Swan & Barton, 2026) report that BT Group's revenue fell by 3.6% to £19.7 billion in FY2026, while pre-tax profit increased by 7.6% to £1.44 billion. Capital expenditure also increased by 6%, partly because of the continued investment required for fibre development.

These financial conditions can create challenges for BT. The company has already reduced its workforce by 7.4% to just over 107,000 employees and has plans for a further 45,000 role reductions by 2030 (Swan & Barton, 2026). This could affect employees through changes to roles, workloads, and job security. At the same time, BT still needs employees with the skills needed to support new technology. This means BT has to balance reducing costs with making sure it has the right skills for the future.

Technological factors

Technology is one of the main forces for change within the telecommunications industry. The development of 5G, full-fibre, broadband, artificial intelligence, and automation is changing the services organisations provide and the skills employees need. GlobalData highlights the continued expansion of fibre and mobile networks in the UK, with BT/EE maintaining a strong position in fixed communications and continuing to invest in fibre infrastructure (GlobalData, 2025).

BT is also responding to these developments through digital transformation. (Swan & Barton, 2026) identify product and IT modernisation, operational simplification and AI enabled capabilities as part of BT's transformation. BT Business has also been developing a more streamlined digital-first experience for small and mediums sized businesses. These changes mean employees may need to develop new digital and technical skills and some roles may also change as automation and AI become more widespread, and staff may need training to help them use new systems and feel confident in their roles.

Technology can also affect workplace culture. (Schein, 2010) explains that organisational culture is based on shared values, beliefs, and assumptions. For BT, a culture that supports learning and adapting could help employees deal with new technology. On the other hand, if employees feel new technology is introduced without enough support or communication, it could lead to uncertainty and resistance.

Political and Legal factors

Government policy and regulation are important factors in how BT operates. Telecommunications companies operate within a highly regulated environment, especially because communications networks are considered important national infrastructure. GlobalData reports that in November 2025, Ofcom worked with regulators and security authorities from the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand to strengthen telecommunications network security and resilience. The

work included areas such as emerging threats, fraud, supply chain security and the reliability and security of networks (GlobalData, 2025).

BT must prioritise security and resilience when building its networks and services. These requirements directly affect employee capability, as staff need the right knowledge and skills to manage security risks and follow regulatory rules. Regulation can also affect customers. For example, Ofcom's One Touch Switch process was brought in during September 2024 to make switching broadband providers easier (Ofcom, 2025). By September 2025, 1.6 million consumers had used this system (GlobalData, 2025). This shows the importance of good customer service, efficient processes and being able to respond to changes in regulation.

Social factors

Changes in customer behaviour and expectations can affect BT's services and the way it operates. Customers increasingly expect reliable connectivity and high quality, seamless customer experiences. BT identifies connectivity, value for money, network quality, and personalised customer experiences as important customer expectations (GlobalData, 2025). At the same time, the telecommunications market continues to develop as customers have greater choice between providers and services. Ofcom's research shows that customer satisfaction and service quality remains important considerations for broadband and mobile customers (Ofcom, 2025).

This can also affect employees who need to understand customer needs while being able to use new systems and process effectively. BT states that employees in service, sales and contact centres regularly engage with customers to understand their needs and help them stay connected (GlobalData, 2025). This places greater importance on communication, problem solving and the ability to provide appropriate support to customers.

Environmental factors

Environmental factors can also affect BT because telecommunications companies operate large networks and require significant physical infrastructure. BT's continued investment in fibre networks means that sustainability needs to be considered when making decisions about infrastructure and future investment. GlobalData reports that UK government is supporting fibre network expansion, with a target of 85% gigabit coverage by 2025 and nationwide FTTH coverage by 2033 (GlobalData, 2025). This shows the scale of the infrastructure development taking place in the UK telecommunications industry. Environmental considerations can also affect employees. Staff may need to understand sustainability and how it relates to BT's infrastructure and business decisions. This can also contribute to a workplace culture where employees are more aware of the environmental side of the organisation's activities.

All in all, the macro environment creates several challenges for BT. Economic conditions affect investment and costs, technology changes the services and skills

required, regulation creates additional responsibilities, social changes shape customer expectations and environmental factors affect infrastructure decisions. These factors do not operate separately. For example, investment in new technology can require employees to develop new skills, while economic conditions may affect how quickly BT can make this investment. This means BT needs to manage both the business and people side of change. A workplace culture that supports learning and adapting could help employees develop skills needed as the organisation changes.

The Microenvironment

The Microenvironment focuses on the factors that are closer to an organisation and can have a more direct effect on its operations and ability to change. These include competitors, customers, employees, suppliers, and other business partners (Kotler & Armstrong, 2021). Unlike the macro environment, BT has more opportunity to respond directly to these pressures. Understanding these factors is important because changes with BT's immediate environment can affect the organisation's strategy, workplace culture, and the capabilities it needs from its employees.

Competitors

Competition is an important force for change within the UK telecommunications market. GlobalData identifies BT/EE, Virgin Media, O2, Vodafone UK, Three UK, and Sky UK as key companies within the market (GlobalData, 2025). This means BT needs to keep up with other providers and continue investing in its services and network. BT has responded by continuing to invest in its network. Openreach is expanding its full-fibre rollout, with BT aiming to reach twenty-five million premises with FTTP by December 2026 (Openreach, 2026). BT Group has also agreed a partnership with Starlink to improve connectivity in rural and remote areas (BT Group, 2025). Competition therefore creates a need for BT to maintain its technical skills of its workforce and continue improving its services. It can also affect workplace culture, as employees need to understand the importance of customer service, innovation and adapting to changes in the market.

Customers

Customers are another important part of BT's microenvironment because their choices directly affect revenue and demand for services. GlobalData reports that BT Business experienced customer declines across areas including voice, broadband, WAN and Ethernet during FY2026 (Swan & Barton, 2026). In response, BT simplified its product portfolio and improved digital customers journeys for small businesses (BT Group plc, 2026). This demonstrates how customer behaviour can lead to organisational change. If customers' expectations change, BT needs to adapt its services and the way it works.

Employees

Employees are especially important because they are responsible for putting organisational changes into practice. BT has made significant workforce changes as

part of its modernising programme, with its workforce becoming leaner as the organisation moves towards a digital future. BT has also previously announced plans for large reductions in roles by 2030, including around 45,000 roles expected to disappear for reasons other than AI (Morris, 2024).

Workplace reductions can create challenges for workplace culture because employees may experience uncertainty about their own roles and concerns about how future changes will affect them (Cully, 1999). So, BT needs to ensure that it retains and develops the capabilities required for its future direction. This is particularly important as it invests in AI, automation, fibre, and digital services. BT reports that it is investing in its people to ensure they have the skills and capabilities needed to adapt to the changing business (BT Group plc, 2025).

Suppliers and Business partners

BT also depends on external organisations and business partners to support its strategy. One example is its agreement with Starlink to provide connectivity in rural and remote areas (BT Group, 2025). Partnerships like this can help BT provide services where its own network may not be enough.

Supply chain security is also important within the telecommunications industry. The UK government highlights the importance of secure and resilient telecom supply chains and identifies the risks associated with dependence on suppliers and telecommunications infrastructure (Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, 2024). This means BT must consider security and reliability when working with external organisations.

Overall Impact on Culture and Capability

BT's microenvironment creates several connected forces for change. Competition encourages BT to invest and improve, customers influence what services and experiences it provides, employees determine whether many of these changes can be implemented successfully and business partners can provide access to technology and skills. These factors are closely connected to workplace culture and capability. A workplace that is able to learn, adapt and work with modern technology can support BT's transformation. However, significant staff reductions and changes to roles can also create uncertainty and resistance. This means BT needs to manage change in a way that considers both the organisations operational requirements and the people who are expected to deliver them.

SWOT Analysis of BT

The analysis of BT's macro and microenvironment highlights its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Strengths include BT's established position in the UK telecommunications market and its existing network infrastructure. BT is also continuing to invest in full-fibre and 5G, which can support its future services and competitiveness (BT Group plc, 2026).

Weaknesses include BT's organisational complexity, legacy services, and the need to change its workforce and skills. BT's continued need to simplify its technology and operations shows the challenges created by existing systems and organisational structures (BT Group plc, 2026).

Opportunities include developments in AI, automation, digital services, and continued investment in fibre. These technologies could help BT improve its services and simplify the way it operates (BT Group plc, 2026).

Threats include strong competition, changing technology, pressure on older services and regulatory requirements. BT's international revenue fell by 15% in FY2026, while competition and pressure on legacy voice and data services remained challenges (Swan & Barton, 2026).

The SWOT shows that BT has strong infrastructure and opportunities from technological developments, but it also faces challenges from legal systems, competition, workforce changes, and the need to adapt to a changing market.

Evaluate how Organisational Stakeholders can be efficiently led through complex workplace change.

BT's Complex Workplace Change

BT is currently going through a major transformation as it responds to changes in technology, competition, and the need to simplify the organisation. The transformation includes investment in AI, automation, fibre networks, and digital services, alongside changes to systems, processes, and the workforce. BT's 2026 Annual Report states that the organisation is reshaping its workforce to create a more digital and customer led organisation and is developing employees' skills to support this change (BT Group plc, 2026).

This can be seen as a complex workplace change because it affects a number of areas in the organisation at the same time. Employees may need to learn new systems and ways of working, while some roles may change or be removed. (Stensaker & Meyer, 2012) found that employees previous experiences of organisational change can affect how they respond to future change. This is relevant to BT because continued restructuring may affect how employees view and respond to further changes. The success of BT's transformation depends on more than introducing recent technology or reducing costs. The organisation also needs to consider how employees, managers, customers, and other stakeholders understand and respond to the change.

BT's Key Organisational Stakeholders

Stakeholders are important because they can affect whether organisational change is accepted and successfully implemented (Lewis, 2007). For BT, employees are

one of the most important stakeholder groups because they are directly affected by changes to roles, technology, and working practices. Managers are also important because they are responsible for communicating changes and supporting employees through them. BT reports that it has invested in leadership development, coaching and mentoring to strengthen its people leaders (BT Group plc, 2026).

Customers are another key stakeholder because BT's transformation is partly focused on improving customer experience and developing digital services. Shareholders are also likely to be interested in the financial results of the transformation, including cost reduction and future growth. And business partners are relevant because BT increasingly works with external organisations to develop technology and services (BT Group plc, 2025).

Different stakeholders may have different expectations. For example, shareholders may focus on financial performance, while employees may be more concerned about job security, workloads, and changes to their roles. This means BT cannot manage all stakeholders in the same way. Effective leadership needs to recognise these different interests while keeping stakeholders informed about the reasons for change (Freeman, 1984).

Communication is very important during this process. Research by (Johansson & Heide, 2008) suggests that communicating about change is not simply about managers giving information to employees; communication can also help employees understand and take part in the change process. This is important for BT because employees are more likely to be involved in implementing the change.

Applying Kotter's 8-Step Change Model

Kotter's 8-Step Change Model provides a structured approach to managing organisational change. (Kotter, 1995) argues that successful transformation involves creating urgency, building a guiding coalition, developing a vision, communicating the vision, removing obstacles, creating short-term wins, continuing to build on the change, and embedding the new approach into the organisation.

Create a sense of urgency

The first stage involves helping stakeholders understand why change is necessary. For BT, the reasons include changing technology, competition, cost pressures, and the need to modernise the organisation. BT's investment in AI and digital technology shows that the organisation is already responding to these pressures (BT Group plc, 2026).

For employees, just explaining the business reasons may not be enough. They may also want to understand how the change will affect their own roles so, clear communication can help reduce uncertainty, especially where employees are worried about restructuring (Oreg, Vakola, & Armenakis, 2011). However, a critique of this step is its reliance on creating urgency. Communicating the need for change can also create negative reactions if employees perceive the change as harmful or

threatening. (Oreg, Vakola, & Armenakis, 2011) show that employees reactions are influenced by the change process and their perceptions of its potential benefits and harms.

Build a guiding coalition

Kotter's second step involves creating a group of people who can lead and support the change. At BT, this would involve senior leaders, managers, and people with knowledge of technology and operations. Managers are particularly useful for this because they have direct contact with employees and can help explain the changes at team level (Balogun, 2006). BT's investment in leadership supports this approach, as the company has introduced coaching, team effectiveness, and mentoring programmes for leaders (BT Group plc, 2026). However, (Appelbaum, Habashy, Malo, & Shafiq, 2012) identify limitations in Kotter's model, including the need for greater consideration of stakeholders. This suggests that relying mainly on a leadership coalition could underrepresent employees' perspectives, which are important when implementing changes across areas such as technology and customer service.

Developing a vision of strategy

The next stage is creating a clear vision for what the organisation is trying to achieve. BT's transformation is focused on becoming a simpler, more digital and customer led organisation. Its new workplace behaviours were developed with input from nearly 27,000 colleagues, showing that employees have had some involvement in shaping the culture BT wants to develop (BT Group plc, 2026). This involvement could help employees understand that the change is not only about reducing costs but also about creating a different way of working.

Communicate the vision

The vision needs to be communicated clearly and regularly. This is very important for BT because its transformation affects a large workforce across various parts of the organisation. Communication should explain not only what is changing but why it is happening and what support is available. (Johansson & Heide, 2008) argue that communication during change should involve more than just providing information. This suggests that BT should give employees opportunities to ask questions and provide feedback rather than relying on messages from senior management.

Remove obstacles

Employees may face barriers when adapting to new technology and processes. BT has responded by investing in training and development. Its 2026 Annual Report claims that an AI Mastery Programme was launched for 14,000 colleagues, with thousands already completing the initial stage (BT Group plc, 2026). This is good because employees may be more willing to accept technological change when they are given the skills and support needed to use it. Removing obstacles involves more

than changing systems, it also means giving employees the confidence and ability to work differently. Yet a critical contradiction remains because it can be hard for employees to embrace new technology when they fear that the same technology could eliminate their jobs (Ismail, Paavo, Ahmed, Brad, & Imran, 2025).

Create short term wins

Kotter argues that organisations should create short-term successes to demonstrate that the change is working. For BT, examples could include improvements in customer service, faster processes, or successful use of AI to reduce repetitive work. BT reports that its engineering teams are already using AI-assisted tools to automate activities such as coding and testing (BT Group plc, 2026). Showing these improvements could help employees see practical benefits from the transformation rather than viewing change as a threat. The critical flaw here is Kotter's assumption that change follows a linear sequence (Hughes, 2016). In a large company like BT, different departments move at different speeds. Engineering teams might experience short-term wins, while other employees may be dealing with restructuring and uncertainty, the model can be seen to overlook the different experiences across departments.

Continue building on the change

The transformation should not stop after early successes. BT is making changes across technology, workforce structure, and its wider organisations, meaning the organisation will need to continue developing employee skills. (Buchanan, et al., 2005) argue that sustaining organisational change depends on factors including leadership, management, workplace culture, and the change process. So, BT needs to maintain support and adapt its approach rather than assuming that early successes will automatically lead to lasting change.

Embed the change

The final stage involves making new behaviours and ways of working part of normal organisational life. BT has already introduced new behaviours intended to guide policies, decisions, and day to day work, with these behaviours being adopted across the Group (BT Group plc, 2026).

Applying Lewin's Change Model

Lewin's model provides an easy way of looking at organisational change through three stages: unfreeze, change, refreeze. Lewin's work focused on understanding group behaviour and how social forces can support or restrict change (Lewin, 1947).

Unfreeze involves preparing people for change by challenging existing ways of working. For BT, this could involve explaining why its current systems, structures and skills are no longer enough for its future direction. Communication is needed at this stage because employees have to understand the reasons for change (Choi & Ruona, 2011).

Change is the stage where new systems, skills and ways of working are introduced. (Burnes, 2004) explains that Lewin's approach involves moving employees towards new behaviours and ways of working as part of the change process. BT's investment in AI training and digital technology provides an example of this as employees are being given opportunities to develop as the organisation changes (BT Group plc, 2026).

Refreeze involves making the new approach part of normal working practices. For BT, this could mean embedding new digital skills, leadership behaviours, and working practices into everyday operations (Burnes, 2004). However, Lewin's model has been criticised for presenting organisational change as a process that can move towards a final stage of stability. (Cummings, Bridgman, & Brown, 2016) argue that the three-step interpretation of Lewin's work can oversimplify organisational change. This is relevant to BT because technology and customer expectations continue to develop, meaning the organisation may need to adapt continuously rather than reach a permanent "refrozen" state.

Critical Evaluation

Both Kotter and Lewin provide useful ways of understanding BT's transformation, but they have limitations. Kotter provides more detailed stages and gives managers practical areas to focus on, such as communication, leadership, and removing barriers. This makes it useful for a large organisation such as BT where many stakeholders are involved. However, its structured sequence may not fully reflect the reality of a complex transformation where different changes happen at the same time (Kotter, 1995).

Lewin provides a simpler framework and places more focus on preparing people, introducing change, and helping new behaviours become established. This makes it useful for considering employee reactions. But the idea of reaching a final "refreeze" state is less suitable for BT because technology, customer expectations and the telecommunications market continue to develop (Cummings, Bridgman, & Brown, 2016).

Overall, the two models can be used together. Kotter provides more detail about how change can be led, while Lewin provides a simple way of considering how employees move from existing ways of working towards new ones. Neither model should be treated as a fixed set of steps. BT's transformation involves continuing technological development and workforce changes, so leaders need to adapt their approach as stakeholders' needs and reactions develop. So, using the two models flexibly may be more appropriate for BT than relying on either model alone.

Conclusion

To conclude, BT is operating in an environment where economic conditions, technology, competition, regulation, and changing customer expectations are creating a need for continued change. The microenvironment also shows how competitors, customers, employees, and business partners can affect BT's ability to respond. These changes have direct links to workplace culture and capability, particularly as BT changes its workforce and develops new digital skills. The analysis of Kotter and Lewin shows that successful change involves more than introducing new technology or changing organisational structures. Employees and other stakeholders need clear communication, support, and effective leadership throughout the process. For BT, managing the people side of change is therefore an important part of achieving its transformation as a whole.

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