

Module: Leading and implementing workplace change

Assignment title: An analysis and critical review of a major change previously implemented by a medium to large organisation



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Executive summary

This report will provide an overview of change management process applied to Asda supermarket. With application of various change management models and analytical tool, further how leadership, employee engagement and organisational culture can impact on organisational change. Concluding whether Asda change was successful or failure and offer recommendations for further development.

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1.0 Introduction

This report was requested by chief executive officer of Asda on 3.5.2020. The purpose of the report is to critically evaluate a change that an organisation has undertaken in the last three years. This report will provide a critical evaluation that examined each stage of the change process with conclusion on its success/failure and offer further recommendations for future development of the change process within the organisation. This report was written by the financial director of Asda, and this report is due on 3rd July 2020. Several relevant textbooks, journals, newspaper articles and websites were researched to compile this report.

2.0 Findings

2.2.1 Brief introduction of the organisation

Asda is the UK's second largest retailer. It was founded in 1949 by Peter Asquith, as associated Dairies and Farm stores limited but shortened this to Asda in 1965. The retailer focused on selling food, electronics, clothing, toys, home furnishings and general merchandise. The organisation also offers a range of additional services which includes 'Asda Money' financial services. The retailer employs over 175,000 colleagues in 631 stores across UK, serving 19 million customers (Business case studies,2019). Asda employees working in variety of roles in Supermarkets, Home Office, Superstores, Distribution, George, and Asda Living. The head office is based in Leeds, west Yorkshire and the organisation operates in the private sector.

In 1980, the organisation grew rapidly, to opening 100th Asda stores across the uk. In the 1990s the Asda clothing brand 'George 'was introduced. Furthermore, the Asda working way was established and provided a basis for a new system of organisation. It made the stores of heroes and encouraged interaction with colleagues. This was the beginning of the culture of Asda which we know and love today (corporate asda,2020). In 1999 Asda joins Walmart, becomes part of the largest supermarket chain in the world. In 2015, Asda celebrates 50 th birthday, of their business. Asda invented a new logo which is 'save money, live better'. In 2019 the market authority (CMA) blocked Asda and Sainsburys merger (corporate asda,2020).

2.2.2 Asda's change

The change being examined in the report is Asda new employment contract. The organisation identified that to remain competitive and adapt to the demands of the market, Asda introduced the contract 6 as voluntary in 2017 and later made it mandatory in 2019. Asda main objectives is to improve overall financial performance by requiring more flexibility from the workforce.

The new terms and conditions of the employment contract included, increased pay with flexible working hours, variable shift patterns with an agreement to work on bank holidays, with no paid breaks and increase in night shift premium (Corporate ASDA, 2020).

The reason of the change was based on financial performance of the organisation. Asda has experienced decline in sales, decrease in profit margin and market share. According to the Guardian article online (2017), Asda has witnessed worst annual figures since taken over by Walmart. Also, the BBC online news (2017), stated that from 2015,2016 and first quarter of 2017, the organisation suffered weak growth, in 2016 the pre-tax profit fell to 19% to £791.7m. This was the result of the strong market pressure and Asda was behind the company's expectations. However, the organisation had some improvement following strategic change made by new COE (BBC NEWS, 2017).

To stay competitive in the market, the organisations need to assess the areas and identify for improvement in their products and services more effectively and adapt to the changing environment. According to the online international journal of operation and production management (2013), financial performance has a positive and significant correlation with environmental proactivity and with environmental performance.

One of the key tasks successful companies perform is that regular monitoring of their financial performance. Management that understands where the business is currently from a performance point of view as well as where it is heading offers a major advantage over those who will not (Dolfinblue,2018).

According Hanks (2019), The companies that move with these changes and adapt their organisational structures to changing conditions are the ones that survive and thrive during those changes when the financial conditions change look internal conflicts.

2.2.3 The draw backs of an organisation engaging in the change process

A change can create resistance to change in every organisation, and there are drawbacks, rules, and guidelines. Therefore, organizations need to integrate proper change management plan. The structured approach and application of techniques, knowledge, and resources to manage change successfully. According to Khan and Hashim (2014) there are two major resistance which include individual sources and organizational sources.

1, The individual sources to resistance includes, habit, fear of unknown, security, economic factors, and selective information processing.

2, Organizational resistance to change includes, organizational structural inertia, limited focus on change, threat to enterprise and threat to established power relationship and resource allocation.

There are models/theories associated with resistance to change and overcoming resistance to change. Kotter and Schlesinger identified four main reasons why change is resisted and overcoming resistance to change and identified six change approaches (refer to appendix 1 & 2).

There are several ways for organisations to overcome employee resistance for examples,

- By implementing effective communication strategies
- To create a strong vision for progress that indicates a personal value for every employee.
- The change team advocates departments and business area.

According to Smith (2019), the disadvantages of organisations engaging in the change process includes, the cost of failure, program failure due to poor communication, training, planning and change strategy. Also, Insufficiency to adapt to changing situations. Moreover, the failure can result in loss in investment, including money, time, and resources. This will have negative impacts to the company culture and employee confidence. Also, could led to reversion to the old way of doing things, this could mean the organisation did not move forward.

2.2.4 The application of change models

The organisation applied Kurt Lewins three stage change model.

Unfreeze

The management team informed the colleagues about why the change is necessary for the organisation, to stay competitive and improve the financial performance. The management team also explained the voluntary employment contract will be permanent, and employees who have not signed it, need to sign. During the consultation process of the change, the leaders has taken concerns and feedback from colleagues, representatives and GMB union. Also, they have been aware that colleagues have responsibilities outside of work and will provide help and support to balance work life (Wood,2019).

Implementation phase

The introduction of the new employment contract terms and conditions, one to one meeting with management team member explaining the terms and conditions, encouraging employees to sign. Most workers have accepted the change. A leaflet has also been provided to colleagues that have outlined plans to 'let go of ' staff who refuse to agree to the new terms and conditions. The leaflet states that, if they will not consent, Asda will cancel jobs on the existing terms and conditions and try to re-engage workers on new terms and conditions. If then they choose not to accept the new terms, they will leave employment (Lockwood,2019).

Re-freeze stage

The management team announced that further pay rise will made in April 2020 for Asda employees. Also, colleagues were given 4 weeks in advance rota for work. Also, the employees were given 12 weeks' notice period, this was extended further by a week in November 2019. The contract change was permanent for all Asda staffs across UK. However, the GMB national officer Gary Carter requested the management for negotiation on the contract change.

2.2.5 Change resistance model of Kubler Ross (1969) coping cycle.

- Denial stage -when they went to make changes, there were elements of the organisation were in denial. The individuals were in denial pretending that it was not happening. They did not want to believe the change process is undertaking.
- Anger- workers were angry and felt the change was unfair, unacceptable and disgraceful, as Asda staff member mentioned, “contract six is shocking, the changes are forcing our members to choose between looking after their families or being able to support them. It’s a disgrace” (Telegraph & Argus,2019). The loyal workers who had serviced Asda over decades have threats of dismissal. This led to protest in Leeds and Plymouth, the protesters handed in a 23,000 strong petition to the company. Also, there was public calls to boycott the company (Jahshan,2019).
- Bargaining – GMB union requested Asda’s senior management for negotiation, this contract change will affect 60,000 colleagues across UK. The organisation must address employees’ concerns, feedbacks and GMB, for improvements to the terms and conditions that provides support for the workforce.
- Depression- Asda workers were terrified of losing their job, this has huge impact on part-time female workers, they were stressed about the situation felt insecure and how they will manage family commitments, also the elderly workers resisted moving to other departments. Even some workers were seeking to bring legal proceedings against Asda.
- Acceptance- eventually majority of the workers accepted the change, as they had no choice and could not lose job at the time of Christmas. According to Asda this contract was fairness for all employees and being in line with the competitors (Onita,2019).

2.2.6 The benefits of change models

A model of change helps identify potential resistance areas and develop strategies intended to eliminate or reduce resistance prior to initiating the change process. The aligned key advantage is that a change model helps to build an effective strategic plan.

Lewin's model is a simple model, it may not be suitable for the current change in the business world, however crucial the change is there. As Burns (2004)

explained,” Many writers acknowledge the significance of Kurt Lewin's contribution to organizational change. However, over the last 20 years, where the focus has been on rapid, transformational change, Lewin's work has increasingly become seen as outmoded and irrelevant to the needs of modern organisations”.

Advantages of lewin change model

- Lewin's Change Model is a simple and easy to understand Change Model. The Lewin model does have fewer steps to follow.
- The Lewin model is a step-by - step model that be an efficient model which is used in the sector of change management.

Disadvantages

In the refreeze stage some employees are concerned if another change is coming, they will be stressed, and this causes them to less productive or successful in their work. Also, there is some criticism of the refreeze stage as there is continuous changes takes place in a challenging environment, the organisation will not have time to get used to the changes.

(Armstrong & Stephen,2006).

Another popular model is Kotter's eight step model

Kotter has described the process of change into several different stages which gives us a better understanding of how change is taking place and how an organisation is progressing through change.

The model of Kotter explains how market research generates the need for change and how changes need to be well communicated to staff members to inspire them to change. Besides that, it also says that inspiring workers is relevant and that motivational aspects such as short-term gain make this model far more appropriate to all kinds of organisations and more effective (Mullins & Christy, 2013).

However according to Juneja (2015), there are disadvantages of this model, since it an 8-step model, skipping one step of this model can create serious problem for the organisation, time consuming the process time takes longer.

- The model is essentially top-down and discourages any scope for participation or co-creation.
- It can result in resistance and/or bitterness between employees if attention is not taken of the curve of change and how people react to significant changes (Expert Program Management, 2018).

2.3 SWOT and PESTLE analysis

SWOT and PESTLE are very useful tools that direct business to the internal and external factors that can influence organisations in a positive or negative way. By identifying what needs to improve also minimising any risks or barrier that can have effect on the organisation internally and externally.

The researcher has conducted a SWOT analysis and Pestle analysis to identify the factors that impacted on the organisation greatly contributed to the required for the change.

2.3.1 SWOT analysis of Asda

To make the change successful here are following strengths of Asda.

- Asda provides wide range of products and services to their customers
- A strong, dedicated workforce.
- The organisation has funds, as Asda spokesman stated, “ This contract is about increasing the take-home pay of more than 100,000 retail colleagues, through an investment of more than £80m, and ensuring that everyone doing the same job is on the same terms and conditions”(Webber ,2019). Also, to adapt to the highly competitive retail sector,
- The company has existing training and development programs, for Asda employees are key assets of company and it invests money and time in training and retaining, developing them.
- Also, previous change experience, as change can be difficult Asda is determined to remain sustainable business for its consumers and

colleagues- in the current situation and in the future (Butler, 2019). (appendix 3 for swot analysis).

Asda was pressurised by rapid changing retail environment as its market share were constantly declining, and it was important that keep up with changes.

2.3.2 PESTLE analysis

The pestle factor impacted on the organisation greatly that contributed to the required for the change

Economic factor- Asda has experienced decline in sales and profit margins in the last few years due to other competitors in the market those include the German retailers Aldi, Lidl and other supermarkets. Also, the inflation rates, increased taxation and persistent price cut from their competitors; this has impacted on the organisation. Asda competitors had highest growth in sales in the last five years expect Asda's sale fall to 0.8 percent year on year (Thompson ,2017). (appendix 3)

2.5.1 why do organisations need change?

Managing organisational transition is the method of preparing and executing change in organisations in a manner that minimises staff opposition and costs to the company while increasing the efficacy of change efforts (Inc.com.2020)

There are several reasons why an organization would need to change. The forces that stimulate change those include, technological factors, political, economic forces, and social forces, (Cawsey, Deszca, & Ingols, 2012). These are key forces that leads organizational change. Businesses must adapt to the current times and ensure that not to fall behind the competitors.

The macro factors influence the decision-making process of companies and affects their efficiency and strategies. Whereas micro factors play a key role in development, distribution, social welfare, and resource allocation. Also operates even without the government interference. It offers vital resources for formulating liberal economic policies and pricing strategies (Craig & Campbell,2005).

2.6.1 The benefits of organisational change

There are several positive factors of change in an organization those include, retaining a competitive edge. Also change stimulates innovation, develops skills, develops employees this enables for better business opportunities and empower employees.

However Cheney (et al,2011), explained that, the more an organization seeks for continuous change, the more difficult it can be for group members to feel a perception of stability, particularly when change does not follow logically or organically from defined missions and strategic direction.

According, Richards (2019), The economy can have a positive and negative effect on companies, and both can be stressful. A strong economy and increased opportunity for goods and services would ensure that businesses consider growth purposes that may include the addition of workers and new facilities. Such changes create opportunities for workers, but they also pose new challenges.

(Appendix 5 for advantages/disadvantages of pestle analysis)

2.4 The complex areas of change

The change being examined in this report is Asda employment contract change. This was the key areas examined, planned, and implemented for the change to be successful.

2.4.1 The people

The researcher has examined and found that the employees resisted to change. Asda staffs were in denial, terrified, angry, and insecure about their job, because they did not feel comfortable working in different departments or different roles. In addition, there are other reasons for employee's resistance. Which included, flexible shifts, the removal of number of long service benefits, removed paid breaks, cuts to the working hours, and put constraints on workers to work on bank holidays.

This change has affected the part-time female workforce and workers with second job. As they need to make arrangement other commitments. Also, the loyal, dedicated staffs who have been part of Asda for over decades have received threats of sack from the leaders.

Asda staffs were forced to sign the new deal otherwise they could lose the job. Asda colleagues had 93% vote in consultative ballot and protested the new flexible contract (Belfast telegraph,2019). Furthermore, agreement to this change meant loss of £500 per year. According to the GMB union up to 12,000 of more than 100,000 are affected by this contract. However, the leaders stated that the contract was necessary because of the intense competition of the retail sector and 95% of those affected will get higher pay at the cost £80million (Kelso, 2019).

2.4.2 Culture

The researcher has examined and found that the culture of Asda has been changed during the implementation phase. The change in culture was not part of the aims and objectives of the proposal. During the planning phase Asda leaders introduced the new employment contract that also included flexible working hours, which was a disadvantage to majority of the staffs. The leaders reassured employees that the contract is about fairness for all staffs. However, during the implementation phase the leaders used coercion approach towards employees to sign the contract and threatened to sack. They were left with no choice. For employees, this change was unfair, they were treated unjustly, disrespected by the leaders, and employees lost faith and trust in managers.

This flexibility will evidently provide financial savings to the organisation and is one of the key components that the retailer has not discussed or disclosed even during consultation process (Munbodh & Colwill, 2019).

2.4.3 Leaders

The researcher has examined and found that the leaders were involved in the planning and implementation phase. The leaders consulted and communicated with staffs about the change. Most workers have agreed to the change. The leaders appreciated that some employees find the change is unsettling, and they do want to lose any workers. Also, they have been supportive and communicated constantly with those workers who refused to sign the contract.

During the implementation phase, the leaders indicated that further pay rises would be increased and that work rotations would be established in advance. They hoped that the employees would agree to change or face the consequences of the final one-on-one meeting, which is the termination of the contract, and the leaders even handed out a leaflet to find a new job. (refer to appendix 6).

2.4.4 leadership in managing change process

Mullins (2013), defines leadership as “relationships through which one person influences the behaviour or actions of other people” (p.369).

Leader is someone who creates an inspiring vision and mutual interest and offers support, assistance, and coach, and gets the best out of people.

The value of leadership in organisations is a management mechanism that helps to optimise productivity and achieve organisational objectives. Nonetheless, leadership is a central element in an efficient management structure (Armstrong and Stephens).

Leadership is critical in managing change, and change is the only way to sustain an organisation in the business world.

According to the online Journal article (2015), Leadership can therefore be a factor that motivates and encourages people to change continuously. Leadership plays a key role in the organisation to motivate and encourage employees to change for the organisation to be able to maintain and adjust to the business world, to ensure that the organisation improves and is innovative.

Most organisations believe that an effective leadership is the key factor that contributes to the performance and change of organisations. Most knowledgeable and intelligent people who have right skills, and knowledge obtained from previous experience, that enables them handle daily tasks effectively and efficiently (Abbas & Asghar,2010).

There different types of leadership style that impacts on managing a change effectively. Akintola and Said (2018), suggests that, with an effective style of leadership, change advocates should be able to 'Influence and eventually change the actions of workers, teams and the company in general.

Examples of most common leadership styles include Autocratic leadership, democratic leadership, transformational leadership, and Bureaucratic leadership styles.

There are several ways a leader can engage with employees in a complex change. According to Professor John Kotter, "70 per cent of all organizational change efforts fail, and one reason for this is executives simply don't get enough buy-in from enough people for their initiatives and ideas."(Brereton,2017).

According to the centre for creative leadership (2020) online article, for a successful complex continuous change, the leaders should adopt specific tools, mentalities, and even structures that help the organization to achieve consistent success in managing complex, constant change. There is still no easy fix to such challenges — you must learn and develop new skills.

Also, Singh (2009) stated that, “leadership, vision, inspiration, and much more are essential ingredients for success in handling change”.

The culture of any organisation is the most important strategic aspect that corporate leaders need to control effectively. According to Pathak (2011), "the organisations culture is affected by three general factors: broad external influences, societal values, and natural culture".

Mirela and Rosca, (2010), explained that the presence of an organisational culture is important, particularly in the early stages, of change where individuals must clearly understand the importance and purpose of the changes that have taken place, in order to act with certainty in a new direction. When employees are comfortable in a good working environment, they are more likely to be focused to achieve organisational goals.

2.5 Change agent

A change agent is someone who has the capacity and power to inspire, facilitate, and organise change efforts. Change agents may be external or internal. The effectiveness of any change initiative depends heavily on the quality and viability of interaction between the change agent and key decision-makers inside the organisation (Lunenburg, 2010).

Examples of internal change agents are CEOs, executives, corporate boards members, and managers. External change agent involves consultants, suppliers, investors, community activists, and government regulators.

There are three key roles that the change agents perform: consulting, training, and research.

2.5.1 External change agents

The benefit of having an external change agent is their objectivity and capacity to provide direct input to management without fear of retaliation.

They can have experiences from other companies so that they have a wide variety of expertise to share. The drawback of having an external change agent is that they do not have a full knowledge and understanding of the business culture. The other downside is the failure of the company to retain control after the change agent leaves (Loitch, 2018).

2.5.2 Internal change agents

Internal change agents have benefits in that they have a good knowledge of the company with respect to individuals, culture, behavioural norms, etc. Their challenge lies in their reputation and their willingness to alter anything that is

already in progress. Irrespective of the model you select, change can be daunting, and if it is not done correctly, it can fail – quite badly (Loitch, 2018).

2.5.3

The researcher has examined and identified that the change agents were used in the change process. They were internal change agents in teams which includes the CEO, senior manager, management team and union representative.

The change agent influenced workers to support the change by initiating, interacting, disseminating, and illustrating the need for change. Explained the benefits of change for both workers and organisations. However, the change agents did not engage or support employees in the implementation.

Leaders have only thought about their benefit from this change. By requiring greater flexibility from the workforce to boost financial efficiency. The risk is that the employee's morale will be affected.

Therefore, the change agents had to deal with lot of Apathetic. As a result, the leaders were unable to manage the change process smoothly. At this point, threats of sacking and termination of the contract were imposed. The GMB union called for a better deal to be negotiated, but the change agents rejected them.

3.0 Conclusion

The researcher has examined and has identified that the change agents worked well in some part of the change process. In the planning phase, the change agents effectively communicated, facilitated, and influenced workers to support the change.

The researcher identified areas of further development to aid in planning and implementing successfully in the future change proposal.

It has been found that on 2.4.2 the culture has changed, is was not part of the change process. This has impacted on employee morale and left some employees without a choice to accept the change. Asda needs to improve the culture.

During the implementation phase, the leaders did not communicate or engage with the staff, they ignored the monitoring and evaluation. Then things started to go wrong in implementation, even though the implementation did happen most workers still opposed change caused chaos. This is because the leaders did

not anticipate the plan of action of possible threats when they conducted the SWOT analysis. This has impacted the organisations reputation by causing lot of negative publicity and breach of physiological contract.

4.0 Recommendations

- To improve on planning and research before undertaking a change proposal
- To improve the implementation phase with effective communication employee engagement and involvement of constructive feedback.
- To monitor, evaluate and analysis the possible risks and opportunities of the change by conducting appropriate SWOT analysis
- Select a good change agent – who has change experience and open to new ideas or someone from internal source who is key advocate, because Asda has hierarchical structure, the change process can take longer.
- To incorporate change management models and change resistance models, for example Kotter's 8 step model or Burns nine element model to aid in successful change proposal.
- To introduce a negotiation plan that works for both parties and offer incentives to motivate employees to approve to the change
- The organisation needs to respect their employee's values and beliefs when undertaking the change process. They need to ensure employees are treated with care and respect in way that the employees feel secure and comfortable working in Asda. Any changes in organisational culture

can have negative impact on people and changes the attitudes of employees towards the implementing phase.

Resistance to Change

Kotter & Schlesinger suggest that there are four main reasons why change is resisted:

Self-interest

**Different Assessment
of the Situation**

**Low tolerance for
change & Inertia**

**Misinformation &
Misunderstanding**

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Appendix 2

Overcoming Resistance to Change

Kotter & Schlesinger suggest that there are six ways of overcoming resistance to change



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Appendix 3 SWOT analysis

Weaknesses

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• <u>There could be a potential loss in loyalty and increased turnover, employees might leave the organisation and look for employment elsewhere</u>
• <u>Decreased motivation, and reduced productivity</u>
• <u>Loss of benefits – no paid breaks and reduced working hours</u>
• <u>Estimated loss of £500 per year with the new contract</u>
• <u>Expenses will be high, more resources and equipment for training</u>
• <u>Part-time employees and employees with childcare are most likely to be affected.</u>

Threats

• There is possibility of breach of contract
• Employee resistance – managers and leaders need to support and communicative effectively about the change and minimize employee resistance
• An employer could dismiss or terminate the contract if employees do not accept the change
• The contract change can affect 60,000 workers
• Employees could take legal proceedings against the organisation.

Opportunities

• This contract change will offer benefit to the colleagues, as well as Asda 's customers. Workers who want to move to the new deal will therefore have more flexibility in their job schedules and ensure that more workers are in the same position at the right time of day to address the demands of the consumers.
• Increased profitability, revenues, and market shares • Promotions, opportunities for progression, develop career in retail
• Innovation of new products and services • Increase customer base
• The organisations will remain a sustainable business for its consumers and colleagues in the present and in the future.

Appendix 4 PESTLE analysis

Political factor

the government has introduced new legislation, increase in tax , consumer rights, this has affected Asda profit margin and market share. This led to the radical change

Social factors

shift in demographic, consumer shopping habits have changed, because of social trends. Customers preference have changed due to rise in online shopping. Also, the convenience stores have attracted customers. with busy schedules people are preferring to shop near them. This has affected Asda to supply more products and services, also this increases the competition of the market in the retail sector. As Asda is no longer the cheapest grocery retailer, even though their unique selling point is 'always low prices'. In fact, the German retailers are the most popular discounters in the retail sector

Economic factor

Andy Clarke, CEO of Walmart Asda, is promising another 500 million pounds or 721.9 million to cut costs as supermarket bidding wars intensify. It is the second time that Asda has reported substantial price cuts since 2013, when the company said it would spend 1.44 billion or one billion pounds to reduce its consumers' costs by 2018 (Souza, 2016).

Appendix 5 Advantages/ disadvantages of PESTLE analysis

The advantages of using the PESTLE tool are the following:

- | |
|---|
| • The tool is simple, easily understood while using. The tool helps you better understand the business environment. |
| • This tool promotes the progress of strategic thought process |
| • The tool reduces the pressure of future corporate threats |

- It can help an organisation anticipate future challenges and take measures to eliminate or reduce their impact.
- This Tool enables businesses to identify new opportunities and utilize successfully

Disadvantages

- The tool needs updating regularly to be more efficient
- Users can over- simplify, this can lead to missing important information
- It requires numerous people to be involved to study from different department
- Can be time consuming and expensive (Rastogi & Trivedi, 2016).

Appendix 6 - Asda leadership style during the change process

The researcher found that the leadership style of Asda during the change, was autocratic leadership, because only they made decision without a proper consultation of the colleagues. The leader's behaviours towards colleagues was bossy and coercive. This type of leadership is only effective in quick decision making in urgent situations or if the leader is more experience and knowledgeable person. According to Iqbal (2011), employee engagement, leadership style and the culture at the workplace play a vital role in achieving successful change.

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