



CATHAY PACIFIC

Change Management

LEVEL 7 ASSESSMENT SPECIFICATION

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Academic honesty/ referencing:	Academic honesty is required. In the main body of your submission you must give credit to authors on whose research and ideas your work is based. Append to your submission a reference list that indicates the books, articles, etc. that you have used, cited or quoted in order to complete this assessment.		

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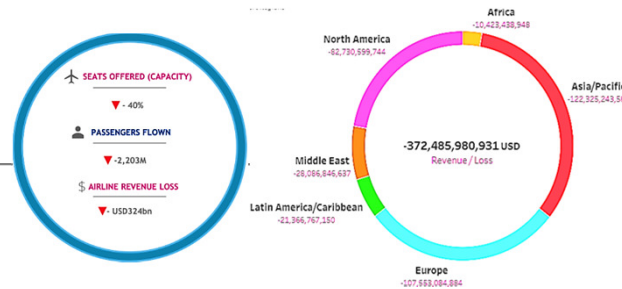
1 Introduction

Air Transportation & Operations
Aircraft Manufacturer & Leasing
Petroleum & Air Fuel

Upstream

Downstream

Leisure & Business Travel
Cargo & Supply Chain
Local Airport Economy



Source: ICAO (2022)

Source: ICAO (2021)

Economic Ripple Effect of Industry

Quarantine & Travel Restrictions

Drop in Airline Capacity & Revenue
ICAO reported 40% drop of airline capacity and USD 324 billion in revenue reductions

Asia Pacific Impact

Global

Hong Kong

Flagship Airline

HKD -7.6M
Revenue S1
2021

-96.4%
Passenger
Demands

-17.7%
Cargo
Needs

Source: Cathay Pacific (2021)

Amalgamation of Challenging
Demand & Supply

Uncertain Outlook



2 Company Background

- Sydney de Kantzow & Roy Farrell Founded Cathay Pacific in Hong Kong in 1946
- Listed in May 1986 on HKEX
- Employed 23,000 staff worldwide
- 8th largest passenger carrier
- 3rd largest air cargo transporter
- Key shareholders are Air China (28.2%) and Swire Pacific (42.3%)
- Fleet of 239 aircraft serving 255 destinations
- The Group has business in ground-handling, catering and laundry service

Source: Cathay Pacific (2021; 2022)



- Operated in dual-brand, premium service of Cathay Pacific and budget stream of Cathay Dragon
- In 2020, Cathay Dragon brand was dissolved
- Instead, Cathay shifted LCC service to acquire HK Express, clouded the city with disappointing sentiments

Source: Chak (2020); Low & Magramo (2020)



- Mintzberg type of big machine organization
- Stereotypical organization behavior
- Challenges business operations and financial performance

- Group revenue loss of HKD 9.9M
- Passenger revenue drop of 92.8%
- Passenger capacity loss of 85% with 868 passengers a day on average
- Cargo revenue dropped by 0.6% due to crew quarantine measures, but thanks to global supply shortage

Source: Cathay Pacific (2021)

3 Environmental Challenges

External Environment

COVID-19 becomes a disruptive force fabricating diverse events externally and internally to increase operational uncertainties for the aviation management, whose managerial capability in dealing with immersive changes is seriously tested (Linden, 2021)



Economy

- World is still on alert with tight border control and travel restrictions
- Aviation movements are crippled among countries
- The World Bank (2020) claimed aviation industry had supported 87.7 million jobs worldwide and half of it had disappeared since the pandemic
- Airlines globally suffered a loss over USD 118.5 billion in 2020
- Projected further loss of over USD 200 billion in 2021
- IMF (2021) warned of possible higher inflation due to global supply chain shortage, which could most definitely push for higher interest rate

Technology

- Simple connectivity is no longer enough for technologically savvy passengers and cargo customers
- Disruptive pandemic provides airlines a moment to rethink digital tactics
- Technology innovations in AI or AR/VR becomes ever more demanding for touchless travel during the COVID-19 (Raina, 2020)
- IoT with real-time data collection, incorporated with big data analytics, could drive operational efficiency and more effective business intelligence
- End-to-end infrastructure and data security

3 Environmental Challenges

External Environment



Social

- CSR becomes more and more an attention from the medias and social platforms towards corporations
- CSR is not only limited to responsibilities of the environment and the returns to communities
- CSR is also a heated topic of how a corporate is responsible enough for its employees, or even unions

3 Environmental Challenges

Industrial Environment



Competition

- Regional competitors from Singapore Airlines and ANA
- Competition in both premium services as well as LCC
- New entrant of Greater Bay Airlines with seasoned staff from Cathay and Cathay Dragon, with agility

Customer

- Passengers are more cautious with airline CSR performance, tying to their loyalties (Kim, Lee & Roh, 2020)
- Personalized digital capability and gamification also considerably help to attract passenger loyalties (Xu, Buhalis & Weber, 2017)

Regulator

- HKSAR government imposed more strict quarantine controls for pilots and crew from February 2021
- Tougher “closed loop” crew cycle means shortage of manpower, significantly affecting Cathay revenues

3 Environmental Challenges

Internal Environment



		2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
Business Operations						
Employee	Flight	3,210	4,101	3,967	3,930	3,894
	Cabin	7,936	13,234	12,726	12,312	12,217
	Ground	8,306	10,007	9,930	9,787	10,563
	Office	6,148	6,858	5,777	6,671	7,126
		32%	25%	22%	26%	27%
Fleet		239	236	212	208	202
Destination		255	255	232	200	182
Financials						
Revenue (HK\$M)		46,934	106,973	111,060	97,284	92,751
Operating Cost (HK\$M)		(58,639)	(103,646)	(107,465)	(99,563)	(93,276)
Profit (HK\$M)		(21,647)	1,691	2,777	(888)	(274)
Profit Margin (%)		(46.1)	1.6	2.1	(1.3)	(0.6)
ATK per HK\$'000 Staff Cost (unit)		1,074	1,879	1,801	1,775	1,730
Stock 293 Year-End (HK\$)		7.2	11.5	11.1	12.1	10.2

Management & Culture

- 70-year old company is imbued with colonial routines and archaic management mindset, unwilling to face changes, which fundamentally challenge Cathay managerially and culturally (Freed, 2017)
- Mistrust constantly instilled within the hierarchies, holding up strategic decision makings
- The only goal Cathay aiming for is to maximize shareholder wealth (Cathay Pacific, 2020), without much attention to its employees or organization

Structure & Employee

- "House Staff" represents top management rotations only within the Swire Group elites and "Swire Prince" dubbed by its Oxbridge preserves, without a chance of fresh eyes and ideas from outside
- A rare 3-year transformation was not able to remove these traditions and routines that is very sad to the organization (Freed, 2017)
- The Mintzberg type of organization is sealed with concrete ceilings rather than glass ceilings, full of bureaucratic processes hard to break
- Even with a recent 2020 downsizing, the office staff size was even bigger than 2018 when it started to be profitable, while Cathay reported a -46.1% ditch in profit margin and Available Tonne Kilometer per Staff hit the lowest
- Owing to its mistrusted corporate culture and colonial management style, Cathay coercively suppresses and threatens union staff legal rights to strike (Kao, 2019) and unilaterally stopped negotiation with cabin crew and pilot unions during 2020 restructuring (Lee, 2020a; Lee, 2020b)
- HKSAR government was required to step in, expressing deep concerns (GovHK, 2020)

3 Environmental Challenges

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 AIRLINE

Resources

Fleet

- Instead of reducing fleet size when demands are looming, Cathay increased fleet size with more to come in 2021-2023 (Interim Report, 2021), where vendor relationship indeed becomes a burden rather than advantage

Financial

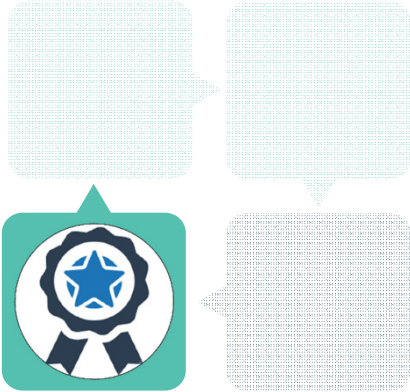
- Airline habitually practice fuel forward hedge to counter volatility, but the instrument is so complex and risky, letting alone the pandemic has injected further convolutions, even Cathay's external auditor KPMG has raised concerns whether this operation is capable to be handled well internally (Annual Report, 2016; 2020)
- The exact hedge had caused a huge loss for Cathay in both 2016 and 2017, which represented -0.6% and -1.3% in profit margin losses
- Annual Report (2020) reported a 42.3% cost reduction in operation, nevertheless nowhere close to 56.1% loss in revenue, excluding other possible cost obligations
- The inadequate management of the airline required a USD 5-billion bailout package from HKSAR government unprecedentedly (Kawase, 2020)

Technology

- When rivals are gearing for digital customer journey in more advanced AI/AR technologies, Cathay was still working on antiquated WhatsApp communication and inflight WiFi connectivity
- Big data was only for weather predictions, a small digital tweak in cargo temperature monitoring, and a primitive digital passport for boarding
- Even all these were engulfed by its 2018 cyber hacking incident towards customer data, demonstrating its incompetence security management.

3 Environmental Challenges

Internal Environment



Corporate Image

- Lax management of closed-loop crew that caused recent Omicron outbreak in Hong Kong has shed dissatisfactory sentiments among HK residents
- 2020 dissolution of Cathay Dragon, a 35-year household name for Hong Kongers, was a sentiment blow to the city
- CSR becomes a challenge for Cathay management to cope with

4 Change Management Models

Selecting the suitable change model(s) during the incubation is crucial for the success of the mission, which is to abridge the change tasks precisely and increase acceptance to people shaped by change (Mitchell, 2013)

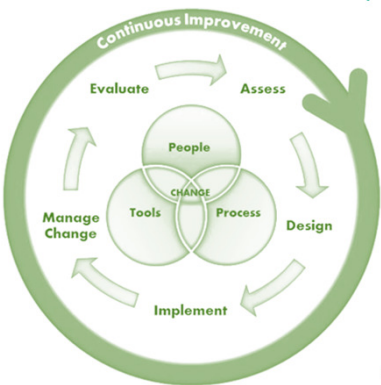
McKinsey 7S

The model was developed by Waterman, Peters and Phillips (1980) for the purpose of identifying strategic objectives specially to changes, which Corral (2008) pointed out it's a perfect framework to analyze company's strategic position and ramification among 7 elements. McKinsey 7S is sometimes being criticized for focusing purely of internal challenges and lack of attention to external forces, however the 7S does provide a holistic view of the fundamentals what a company operates within and often ignored once the business became a routine (Hamdo, 2021).

In the case of 76-year-old Cathay, this definitely is a huge hurdle for change. Other than System within the 'Hard S' is constantly being looked into in terms of technology and fleet, the rest 6S are 'systematically' being ignored, among which Staff, Style and Shared Values are the most challenging elements letting alone years of unsuccessful Strategies.

For a highly effective organization, all these key elements are essentially interlocked for its success and sustainability, especially upon business volatility. The model provides a perfect prelude and start-point before any executable model to follow (Cox, Pinfield and Rutter, 2018).

In view of Cathay's company history, culture, and prior transformation experience, this research would propose a mixture of McKinsey 7S and Kotter's emergent change to manage both internal and external change forces in supplementary



4 Change Management Models

The success of supplementary approach of both McKinsey 7S and Kotter's models was celebrated by Ratsch, Sewell and Pennington (2019)

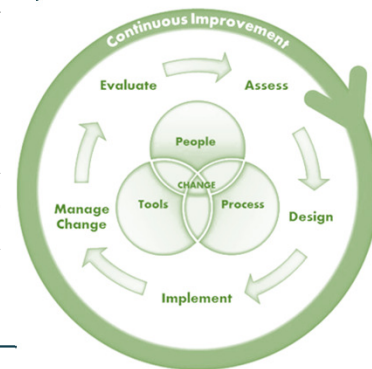
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Kotter's 8-Step Model

Created by Kotter, the author (2012) emphasized an all-hands-on-deck change scenario to face the unexpected and unpredictability, when organization needs to remain competitive and to combat with continuous external change forces. The key difference between Kotter's model from classic Lewin's is the emphasis on political coalition and vision (Dipnarine, 2016). Nevertheless, Venkateswaran (2014) argued that the model couldn't deliver change vision early enough at Step 1, when buy-in is required most to embrace the change. McKinsey 7S' pre-context could well address the issue to equip urgency with shared value and change vision identification prior.

Had Cathay followed a consistent emergent change model, some of the fruitful achievements from its rare 2017 transformation could have been reserved. Instead, all the internal challenges discussed previously were worsened under brutal pounding from the pandemic and failed ill-prepared restructuring in 2020, along with broken Staff, Strategy and Shared Values in core.

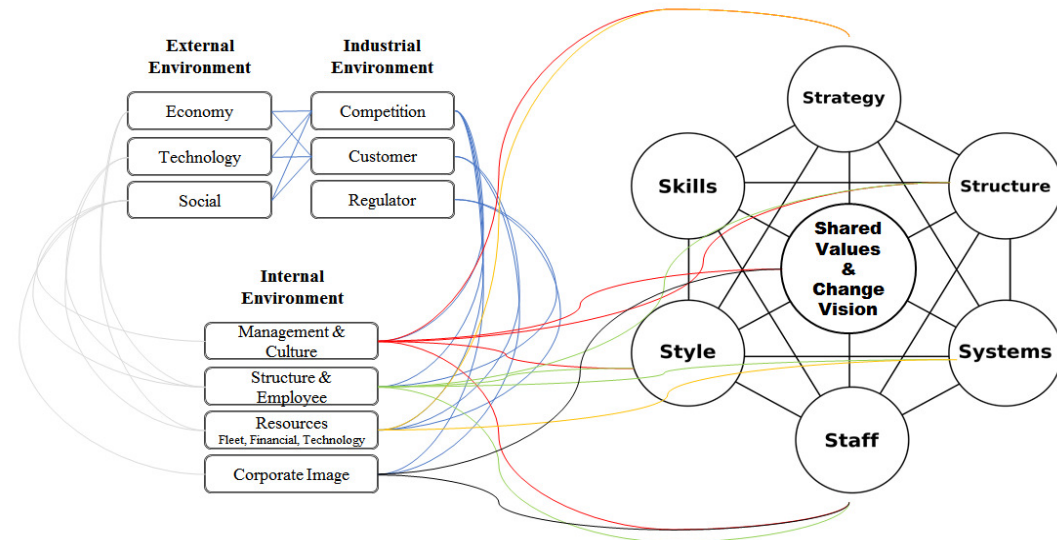
Although Kotter's Model brings dynamics inside organization that promotes change participation, it still constitutes a shortfall in top-down manner which vision is created at the top (Galli, 2018). People tend to anticipate towards where their expectation achieves; thus a greater engagement to direct participation towards realizing their common belief of vision: leadership.



Management Challenges

Through the analysis and discussion of external, industrial and internal challenges, the research utilizes a visual approach to explore significant links of these challenging factors, of which also have most impacts to McKinsey's 7S. This could most straightforwardly provide Cathay a glimpse of its noteworthy managerial challenges listed below, which are the foundations for change management to attack with.

- To improve business strategies and processes, physically and technologically, to compete with industrial rivals and attract customers
- To modernize organizational culture and structure to enhance trust among top management, middle management and employees, with a goal also to boost transparency and communication with unions
- To emphasize on leadership style and shared vision to reinvigorate the organization and its corporate image through the industry



Source: Constructed by Author

Change Barriers

In order to safeguard a relatively smoother sail of change management process, an early identification of resistance factors is the key.

- Senior management buy-in and confidence of the change to modernize Cathay
- Employees and union support, especially trust-building amongst middle management teams
- Major suppliers' collaboration along the way

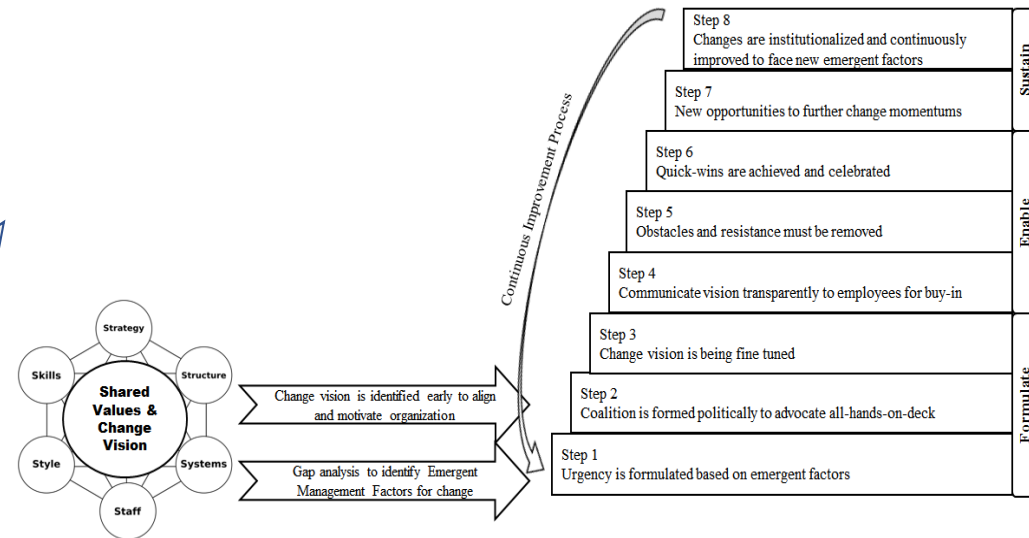
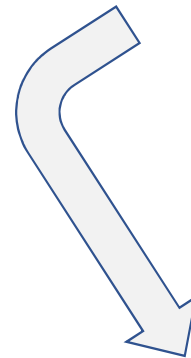
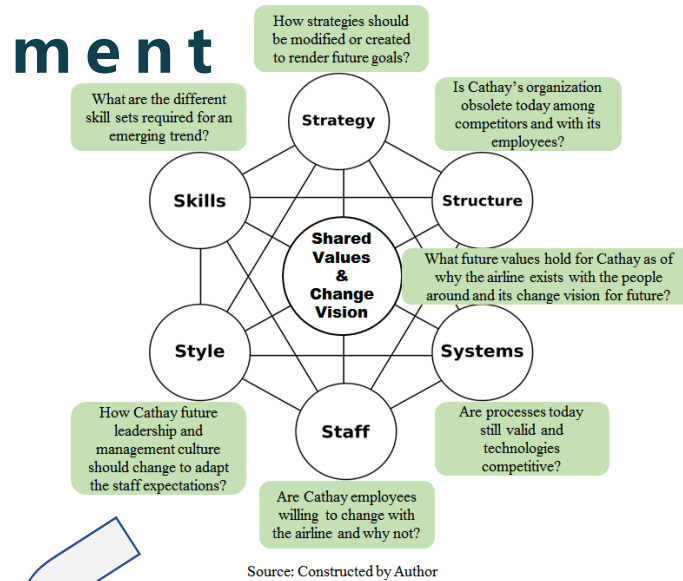
4 Change Management Application

Status Quo

The disastrous business impact from COVID-19 was a proxy to reveal Cathay's proud-but-failed 3-year transformation from 2017 and its loss of momentum to sustain the economic turbulence in 2020. Giving the credit, the rare 2017 transformation did provide some underlying changes to its System and Strategies, but only limited to these domains. The unfortunate so-called 2020 restructuring was catastrophically managed only on Staff being axed. Both ill-planned change management launches demonstrated a classic lack of thorough strategic analysis, value and vision providing, coalition buy-in, change sustainability, continuous improvement, and leadership; instead full of resistance and unwillingness to change.

CIP

The research would suggest the following approaches re-design the change framework with Kotter's Model for primary deployment, while McKinsey 7S is in support to qualify the status quo and to bridge the emergent factor with urgency for change.

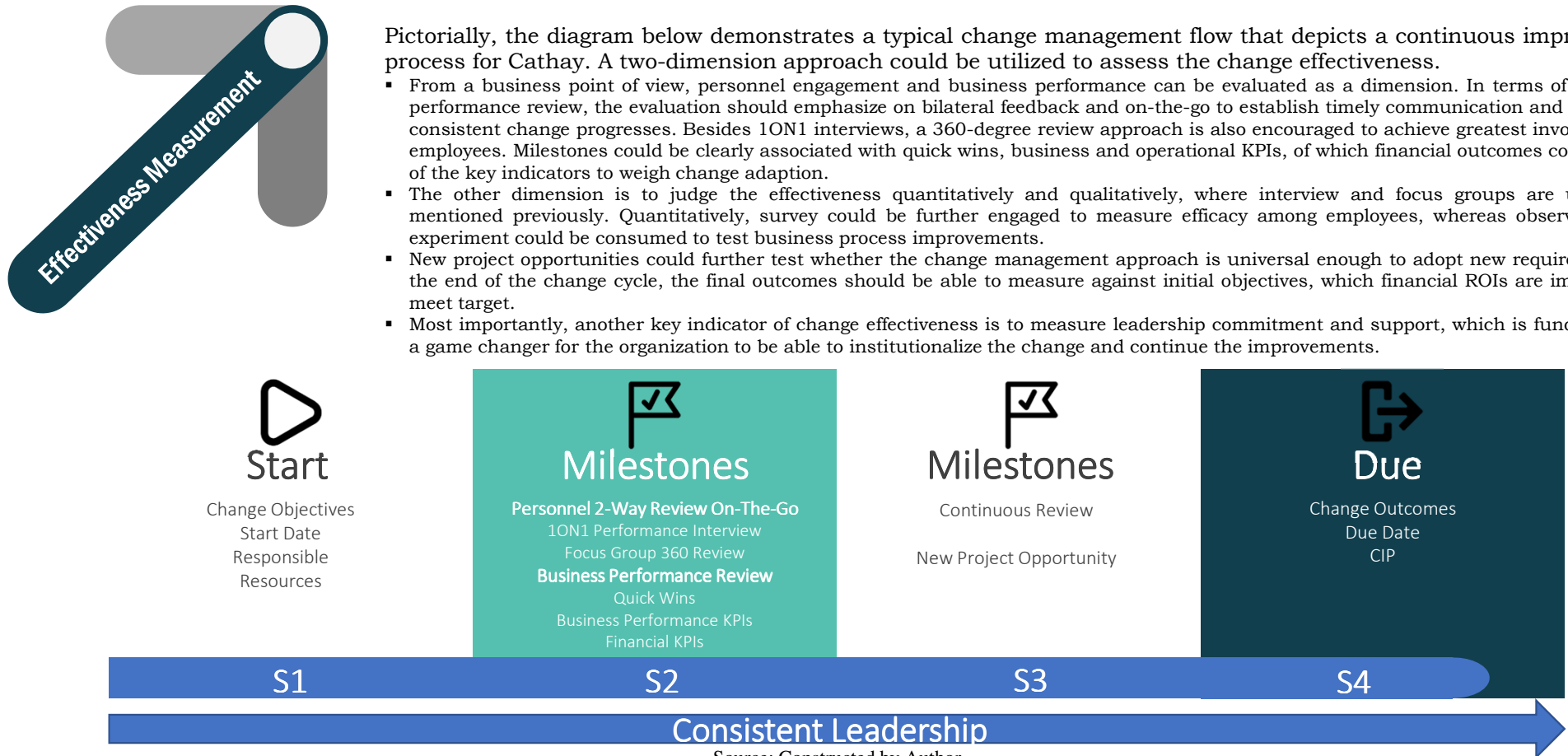


4 Change Management Application

A detail SMART plan is definitely required to accompany the implementation with clear timelines, objectives, milestones, resources and outcomes identified.

Pictorially, the diagram below demonstrates a typical change management flow that depicts a continuous improvement process for Cathay. A two-dimension approach could be utilized to assess the change effectiveness.

- From a business point of view, personnel engagement and business performance can be evaluated as a dimension. In terms of personnel performance review, the evaluation should emphasize on bilateral feedback and on-the-go to establish timely communication and to monitor consistent change progresses. Besides 1ON1 interviews, a 360-degree review approach is also encouraged to achieve greatest involvement of employees. Milestones could be clearly associated with quick wins, business and operational KPIs, of which financial outcomes could be one of the key indicators to weigh change adaption.
- The other dimension is to judge the effectiveness quantitatively and qualitatively, where interview and focus groups are utilized as mentioned previously. Quantitatively, survey could be further engaged to measure efficacy among employees, whereas observation and experiment could be consumed to test business process improvements.
- New project opportunities could further test whether the change management approach is universal enough to adopt new requirements. At the end of the change cycle, the final outcomes should be able to measure against initial objectives, which financial ROIs are important to meet target.
- Most importantly, another key indicator of change effectiveness is to measure leadership commitment and support, which is fundamentally a game changer for the organization to be able to institutionalize the change and continue the improvements.



5 Conclusion

Wherever human being is involved and interacted with, organism would present and an organization is no exception. Therefore, change has to be accepted and dealt with such as any change in nature to life.

Cathay Pacific's crumbling business is a perfect example of how indifference to modern change and poorly managed transformation can produce vital impact to business. Through analytical discussion, the research successfully identified 1) challenging macro and micro factors affecting Cathay operations today 2) the appropriate change models could reshape the transformation effectively 3) change frameworks could strategically answer Cathay's management challenges and change resistance.

Cathay management team must have its resolution to manage uncertainties prudently with transformation and stay competitive readily ahead of unpredictable emergent forces.

Q&A

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