

Title: Implementing Change at EasyJet

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to critically review strategies of a major change previously implemented by EasyJet to ensure sustainable long-term success of the organisation and tackle any failures encountered and rectify appropriately while meeting the needs of EasyJet's passengers.

EasyJet have been renowned for their forward thinking via innovation through continuous improvements since the launch back in 1995. With a fast-paced technological world, how will EasyJet plan and implement the change of implementing self-check in kiosks effectively into the core of the business?

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1.0 Introduction

On the 27th of April 2020 a report has been requested by the host organisation R. J Watkins Consultancy LTD. The report has been requested to be submitted on the 3rd July 2020 and the purpose of this report is to highlight the relationship between environmental changes and EasyJet's capabilities. The researcher will be critically analysing contemporary issues faced by EasyJet and how the organisation manage change while evaluating internal and external factors. The report will be conducted with the use of several textbooks, journals and articles to gather relevant information to underpin sources for the report.

2.0 Findings

2.1 Overview of EasyJet

EasyJet, the low-cost budget airline operator officially launched a new self-service check in facility on 12th May 2016 at Gatwick Airport in London. The kiosks verify passports against boarding passes before baggage are placed for weighing and tagging which is printed by the machine and can be attached by the passenger. Before baggage is dispatched into the airport system, laser scanners check that the information is correct. The self-service kiosks shape change in adapting to the future of airports and innovative facilities and in 2017 all EasyJet operations were moved into one terminal at Gatwick in order to enhance customer experience (Airport Suppliers, 2016 and Law Insider, 2020). Key historical dates:

- 1998: EasyJet offers online booking of flights
- 2016: EasyJet launches the world's largest self-service (check-in and bag drop)
- 2017: EasyJet trials self-check-in kiosks at Gatwick
- 2018: EasyJet introduces advanced biometric trials
- 2020: EasyJet operates the self-service kiosks from North and South Terminals at Gatwick.

(EasyJet, 2020 and Future Travel Experience, 2018).

The implementation of this operational change of 100% self-check-in service (Aviation Business News, 2019) and technological change of offering kiosk systems (Trip Reporter, 2016) in modifying services was based on the need

to help reduce passenger check in times by at least 50%. This change has help facilitate 90% of passenger queuing times to less than five minutes. The recognition that change needs to happen underpins Lewin's first 'unfreezing' stage (see appendix 1) (Mindtools, 2020) whereby EasyJet needed to explore different ways to roll out self-check-in facilities in airports. According to Harvard Business Review (2004) operational innovation is an entirely new concept in providing customer service and activities an organisation performs and state that technological investments stimulate growth and are reliable. Execution is pivotal in operational improvement as departure from familiar norms are deep routed and any change effects the core of the organisation. Operational change needs executive leadership as changes ripple outwards to all departments of the organisation and thus need executive leadership as well as reward systems but this is not embraced in most organisations as there are unpleasant characterises set in corporate leadership. According to Brown (1998) employees will actively seek change without much hesitation if the unfreezing stage has been successfully negotiated.

2.2 Nature and Change Undertaken by EasyJet

In the planning stage, EasyJet initially planned the change by trialling the self-check-in facilities at 43 Gatwick routes over three months and approximately 10,000 travellers participated. Coalition with Gatwick (Future Travel Experience, 2018) demonstrates Kotter's second step (see appendix 2) 'building a guiding coalition (Kotter, 2014) whereby EasyJet created a network like structure to align with people's energies. The trialling initiation also underpins

Lewin's 'unfreezing stage and demonstrates that EasyJet recognised that change must happen and planned accordingly (Brown, 1998 and EasyJet, 2020).

EasyJet collected data to establish:

- The simplification of the process and reduction of issues as opposed to human error
- Time taken on each interaction (queuing times)
- How passengers interact with technology and in turn the ease of passenger journey.

On completion of data compiled, EasyJet adjusted and adapted the technology in order to fully implement the change to wider airports (Future Travel Experience, 2018). According to The Telegraph (2018) EasyJet recognised the need for technological advances and marked it as a new era for travel and implementing the change had enhanced customer experience. This notion underpins Lewin's second phase 'change implementation' (Brown, 1998) whereby the awareness was realised that change must happen and applied the transitional move effectively as EasyJet recognised emerging trends on consumer habits (EasyJet, 2020) and worked on technological capabilities in order to fulfil needs. EasyJet recognised that consumers were using more technology and less face to face interaction (The Telegraph, 2018) so it is evident that Kotter's change model's first step 'a need for urgency' was utilised whereby EasyJet possessed a competitive advantage by introducing kiosks at airports (Kotter and Cohen, 2002 and Kotter, 2020). However, EasyJet did face criticism as the change was met with resistance from consumers who felt that the kiosks did not work efficiently and caused delays and missed flights while others expressed

an invasion of human infringement such as misidentification (Daily Record, 2017 and The Telegraph, 2018). This resistance coincides with Kubler-Ross change curve's 'frustration' stage (see appendix 3) (Insights, 2020) where signs of doubts set in through consumer confusion but through the trials which were led (The Telegraph, 2018) acceptance were widely welcomed by the majority. An example of how EasyJet engaged with customers on delays and disruptions caused by the kiosks were through updates via email, text messages and live updates via the app to offer support and what customers should do next (EasyJet, 2020).

2.2.1 Benefits and Drawbacks of Change Models

Lewin's change model framework is relatively easy to understand and follow as recognising the three distinct stages enables planning to implement change firstly through motivation to change (unfreeze). The 'change implementation' phase promotes the empowering of people to embrace new ways through communicating. And lastly, 'refreeze' brings the organisation in to a sense of stability through confidence that change is here to stay (Mindtool, 2020). Major disadvantages of the Lewin's model include:

- Insecurity amongst employees in terms of performance to effectively adapt to the change
- The time needed to refreeze to the new state of change as environment plays a challenging factor in freezing.

(Gupta, 2020).

For Kotter's 8-step change model to be deemed successful, each step must be incorporated into the culture of the

organisation and careful planning provides the foundation in implementing change (Mindtools, 2020). However, Expert Programme Management (2018) state that the drawbacks to the model are as follows:

- It is a top-down model which means opportunities are missed as not all are involved in the co-creation of the vision
- There are resistance and resentment from employees who do not accept the change.

Kubler-Ross change curve model is beneficial as it demonstrates a positive move along the curve towards acceptance of the outcome however if the organisation does not actively support people through the stages of the curve, then some individuals may become stuck. For people to benefit from utilising the curve model there must be understanding of the various personality types within departments and offer help through the change process (Insights, 2020).

2.3 Influences of Micro and Macro Environment on EasyJet

According to Campbell and Craig (2005) change is a feature of organisational life, but change can be accelerated by micro and macro environment and so organisations need to adapt internal operations, strategies and structures to meet new external conditions. Proactive change is initiated by an organisations' desire and reactive change is forced upon by the organisations' environment.

2.3.1 SWOT Analysis

Upon undertaking a SWOT analysis (see appendix 5) on the ‘change’ implemented by EasyJet, the researcher has recognised the following key areas that are felt to be of significance in the change process.

Strengths

To understand EasyJet’s reasons for the change to be considered and implemented, Kurt Lewin’s Force Field Analysis tool (see appendix 4) guided the ‘reasons for’ the launching of self-automated kiosks and the additions of advanced biometric trials in 2018 (Future Travel Experience, 2018 and The Telegraph, 2018). Connelly (2017) states that it is important to define the vision of a future desired state and recognise the forces within social situations and to achieve success. The strengthening of the driving forces needs to outweigh the restraining forces (obstacles). After the trial, EasyJet’s passengers use of self-tagging system grown exponentially. This led to the change from 37 check-in desks to 48 automated kiosks. Findings resulted in majority of EasyJet’s passengers choosing kiosks over traditional bag drop methods. The major benefits included efficiency and customer convenience. The ground crew were also free from ‘bag tagging’ duties and were on hand to help navigate and assist those in need of assistance with the system. Customers felt the EasyJet crew were friendlier and more helpful due to the change (Future Airport, 2016). Brown (1998) states that Lundsberg model considers incremental changes in culture leads to the occurrence of a triggering event that stimulates the release of tensions built up by pressures such as time consumption at airports (The Telegraph, 2017). However,

Lundberg's model (see appendix 5) (Brown, 1998) argues that internal permitting conditions such as 'system readiness' needs a collective sense of people willing to change for example, stakeholders such as customers and employees adhering to precipitating pressures for organisational growth and actively welcoming change, Similarly, Kotter's 4th step requires large amounts of people to have a common interest to drive the change in implementing kiosks (Kotter, 2014 and Kotter, 2020).

Weaknesses

The introduction of implementation of kiosks (The Telegraph, 2018) has led to an obstacle, the self-check-in process feeling robotic and having no human element to it. The New York Times (2017) state that people who lacked social contact were more likely to experience elevated stress and lack of social interactions can be damaging. Insights (2020) state that stage 3 of the Change Curve, is where confusion and doubt set in as passengers want to welcome the change but are doubtful as old ways are a habit (traditional check-in desks). Signs of acceptance were the successful rolling out of 100% automated kiosks after trials at Gatwick and human assistance offered if needed (Airport Suppliers, 2016 and Future Airport, 2016). The 'unfreezing' phase (Brown, 1998 and EasyJet, 2020) of the current state (check-in desks) to the vision of fully automated kiosks met with hesitation due to system functionality leading to longer queueing times which defied the purpose of the change in the first place (Daily Record, 2017 and Wales Online, 2020). Saksvik (2009) states that resistance to change is behavioural and attitudes to readiness demonstrates commitment. The openness to change values

involves self-direction and stimulation whereas the conservation values consists of tradition and conformity.

Opportunities

Lundberg's model (Brown, 1998) requires a further condition for cultural change initiation. Environmental opportunities in implementing kiosks at airports was a technological breakthrough and establishment of the new order depends on the culture change strategy via intervention. EasyJet partnered with Gatwick and collected data to establish:

- Pace of change: how long will each interaction take and how passengers interact with technology
- Scope of change: Queuing times
- Time span: Simplicity of the kiosks such as efficiency and process.

(Brown, 1998: Future Travel Experience, 2018: The Telegraph, 2018).

Organisations collecting data provides a deeper understanding of the way consumers behave and can identify ways to enhance customer experience. Data collection can provide vital information on how customers interact, and so organisations can tweak services to optimise user experience (Truyo, 2019).

Threats

It was reported that there were glitches in EasyJet's systems resulting in mixing up customer flight times and dates when travellers checked in. Other issues with the kiosks were the non-acceptance of baggage resulting in not being able to print baggage tags. This malfunction resulted in missed flights.

Customers felt that the kiosks were causing a hindrance and led them to pay extra money for alternate flights with other airlines (Daily Record, 2017 and Wales Online, 2020). The Telegraph (2018) stated that EasyJet's facial recognition technology did not always work and can cause infringement of human rights (matched incorrectly with another person). Malware software has a harmful intent and can cause systems to fail and corrupt business information and provide costly to organisations (Whiting, 2020). Lewin's 'refreezing' phase can sometimes provide chaotic and flexibility is demanded (Connelly, 2016) and so stage 5 of the Change Curve: problem solving (Insights, 2020) whereby ownership must be taken on what is lost and start testing and exploring. In order to stabilise change EasyJet must learn how to adapt.

2.3.2 PESTLE Analysis

Upon undertaking a PESTLE analysis (see appendix 7) on the 'change' implemented by EasyJet, the researcher has distinguished the following factors that are felt to be of significance in the change process.

Economic Factors

Implementing self service facilities benefit EasyJet by saving money per flight resulting to millions of pounds saved over the duration of a year and can in turn offer consumers affordable fares (Trip Reporter, 2016 and EasyJet, 2020). Small Business (2020) state that implementing organisational change needs to be managed effectively to maintain productivity and efficiency. Confidence in the organisation's ability can lead to the control of costs. Stage 6 of the Change

Curve (Insights, 2020) is the beginnings of a new routine and when profits align with the changes made, benefits will show in the form of profits (EasyJet, 2020). Gatwick's confidence in the self-check-in service led to a £2.5 billion investment programme (Trip Reporter, 2016). EasyJet's partnership with Gatwick has given sustainability to build on change (Kotter's step 7 of the change model) and has facilitated the long-term credibility to make continuous improvements (Kotter, 2014 and Kotter, 2020). Strong managed relationship with partners need to be preserved in order to maintain confidence (Small Business, 2020). Macro factors for the change occurring were due to the record numbers of customers (consumer spending) that were flying with EasyJet (96.1 million) and so the impact of the introduction of self-help initiatives helped in delivering valuable returns and were evident in operational performance (EasyJet plc, 2019).

Sociological Factors

EasyJet believe that by installing multiple kiosks, a larger number of travellers can access them at one time providing efficiency of service while at the airport. Given the volume of passengers in society now, adoption of self-check in is commonplace in airports. Findings in easyJet passengers using the online check in service (90%) has led in rolling out 100% self-check in services at airports prompting customer empowerment and positivity (Aviation Business News, 2019: EasyJet, 2020: The Telegraph, 2018: Trip reporter, 2016).

Technological Factors

EasyJet tapped into a fast-growing technological landscape and offered new ways of providing services and using

technology has demonstrated new ways of communicating providing a seamless airport journey (EasyJet, 2020). Trip Reporter (2016) stated that implementation of technological facilities was a result of millions of passengers travelling through the airport and that it was crucial to make travel easier. Making space for technology allowing passenger processing to be to a minimum eliminates queues while allowing the people to take charge of the time spent at the airport. EasyJet's technology insight increases customer relationship management leading to loyalty (EasyJet, 2020). From a sustainability perspective, the airline has always worked on the development of new technology. This has been demonstrated through how the technology has evolved over the years to the newest implementation of biometric technology currently in operation at airports (EasyJet, 2020 and The Telegraph, 2018).

2.4 Involvement of Leaders

The change examined was an operational change to decrease passenger queuing times by 50% at airports (Trip Reporter, 2016) and the change implemented was the introduction of self-service check-in facilities to unfreeze (Mindtools, 2020) the current state (manned check-in desks) to a newer more efficient process (EasyJet, 2020). Change is defined as a transitional state. New complexities such as technology requires continuous developments towards 'change' initiatives and is a triggering force for an ever-changing future (European Journal of Business and Management, 2018). Northouse (2015) explains that leadership is about change and often organisations resist changes due to rule changes and

new concepts and so an ideal leader needs to be socially perceptive in order to implement change effectively. The researcher has identified key involvement of leaders who supported and helped in the planning and implementation of kiosks. These leaders were mainly external stakeholders who were directly affected by the change. Here are two leaders:

- Philip Holder, Head of Operations at Bristol Airport stated that through the trial, passenger processing was speeding and initial feedback from passengers were positive. In order to implement the change Holder recognised that technology enhanced airport journey and recognised bag drop as a solution (Bristol Airport, 2017)
- Guy Stephenson, chief commercial officer for Gatwick Airport, stated that by moving all operations in to one terminal created a new space for technology to facilitate in speeding of passenger processing and eliminated queues and invested £2.5 billion to program the transformational change (Passenger Terminal Today, 2016).

EasyJet (2020) state that they do not believe in hierarchy and levels of management but rather encourage a ‘one team’ approach in solving complex issues. Regular communication from EasyJet’s CEO with employees regarding key issues and discussions on workplace changes via internal collaboration platforms encourage feedback from employees. In 2019 EasyJet recognised the importance of managing change and introduced a feedback platform to seek views and findings showed an overall employee engagement score of 7.9 out of 10 in challenging operating environment. Moya Greene DBE was appointed as an Employee Representative Director to

further bring the voice of employees and consideration of how organisational change may affect them into corporate decisions (EasyJet, 2020).

2.5 Change Agents' Influence on the Change Process

External Change Agent

The researcher can determine the 'change agent' that influenced the change was in the role of an external stakeholder, Project Leader for Check-in transformation at Gatwick, Gavin Jackson. According to McKinsey and Company (2017) change agents are vital in lean transformation as they can use possessed knowledge and contacts to learn as they go and adopt new practices. Jackson explained that in implementing the new check-in area was an accumulation of four years' work. In the planning stage, a few trials were experimented before a solution was chosen. Jackson stated that the one-stage bag drop was chosen for EasyJet after trialling solutions with other airlines and that this was the right fit in speeding up the processing of passengers. (Future Travel Experience, 2016). According to Investors in People (2020) organisational change needs someone spearheading the transition, a leader with a deeper understanding of the change at hand and ensuring that there is a smooth journey. A quality of a change agent is the ability to research in order to benefit peoples' interaction with the change. This underlines Jackson's experimentation of different solutions and demonstrating patience to play the long game. The researcher can determine that Jackson is an appropriate advocate as the change agent has:

- Helped in the spread of the idea quickly

- Has expertise in the area being changed
- Experience with the change itself
- Recognised and understood the gap the change is to fill
- Vision on the end results.

(Shapiro, 2010).

Internal Change Agent

Moya Greene acted as an internal change agent by supporting staff on the strategic change. The two engagement bodies Greene liaised with were the European Works Council (EWC) and Management and Administration Consultative Group (MACG). Through meetings with both groups Greene communicated with employees on changes to the organisation and offered solutions to staff and expressed the benefits of the operational change and training activities to meet the changes made (EasyJet plc, 2019). Shapiro (2010) states that a good leader creates an energised environment that is aligned with the change.

3.0 Conclusion

To conclude the report, the researcher has found many areas of success within the change process. EasyJet recognised the changes in the way passengers were interacting with the company in other aspects such as online facilities and so implemented an operational change in the way the airport service was run to a newer technological check-in service which would reduce passenger check in times by 50%. To execute such a dramatic change, EasyJet had to ensure there would be no resistance once the automated machines were

fully implemented nationwide. To reduce disruption and to learn from how the kiosks function, EasyJet utilised the planning stage and initially trialled the change at Gatwick for a set duration, studied the data, made changes and then implemented to a wider network. The trial demonstrated that EasyJet did not just fully implement the change hastily but rather cautiously tested the kiosks to test capabilities alongside passengers' engagement. EasyJet then went and adjusted the kiosks before fully implementing nationwide. Partnership with airport leaders facilitated the change to be adopted into airports more successfully as all providing support and guidance. Internal change agent's involvement was crucial in keeping employees up to date with corporate decisions. All partners were on par with the change and showed an aligning of energies. The 'change agent' Gavin Jackson ensured success of the change process via personal knowledge and expertise in the field and having the knowhow. This resulted in Jackson patiently trialling potential avenues over four years to get the right fit for EasyJet. EasyJet need to ensure that the kiosks run efficiently and without error so a seamless airport experience can occur in the future.

4.0 Recommendations

Areas that need further development to aid organisational success in the future are:

1. Research and development of kiosks to further enhance customer experience: as biometric technology have been introduced, other avenues in to identifying customers via the kiosks can be investigated such fingerprint recognition, voice recognition etc. This will eliminate the threat of misidentification.

2. Ensure the systems are not susceptible to malfunction/cyber threats as this would weaken consumer confidence: analyse systematic failures and work to improve effectiveness. Issues with baggage can be rectified if EasyJet can develop a software where bags can be checked for eligibility before passengers leave for the airport. An interactive app that can measure the dimensions of the baggage would prove useful.
3. Welcome feedback on all changes undertaken by EasyJet as this would demonstrate engagement of fulfilling needs: EasyJet offer several services and by undertaking surveys, feedback can highlight areas in need of improvement.
4. Devise a variation of bag-drop opportunities and kiosks based on passenger requirement: offer a solution of auto bag pick up from passengers' property so passengers can use fast track kiosks that does not require scanning of baggage.

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6.0 Appendices

Appendix 1

Kurt Lewin's Change Model



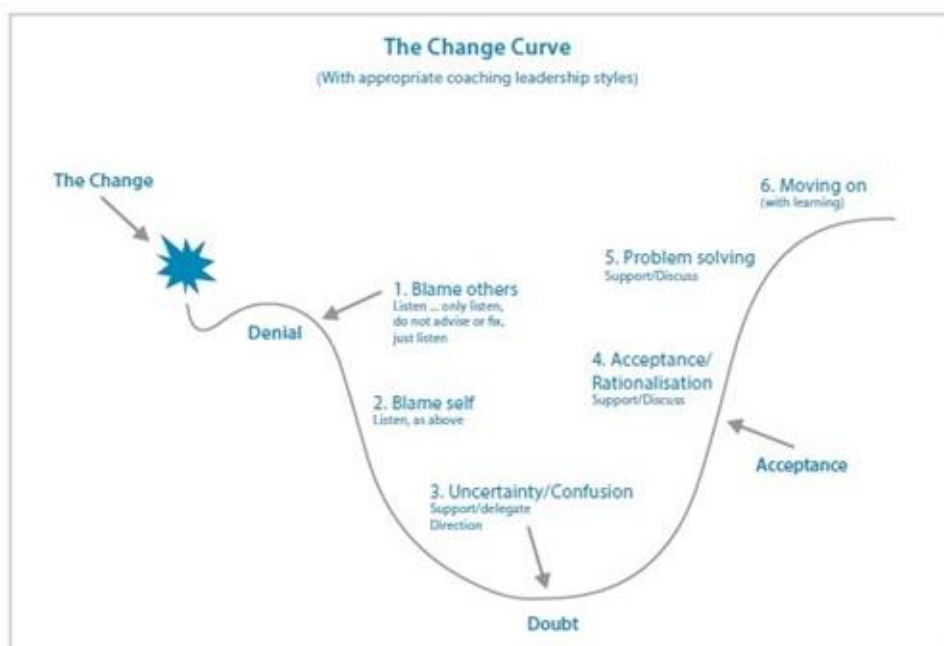
Appendix 2

Kotter's 8 Step Change Model



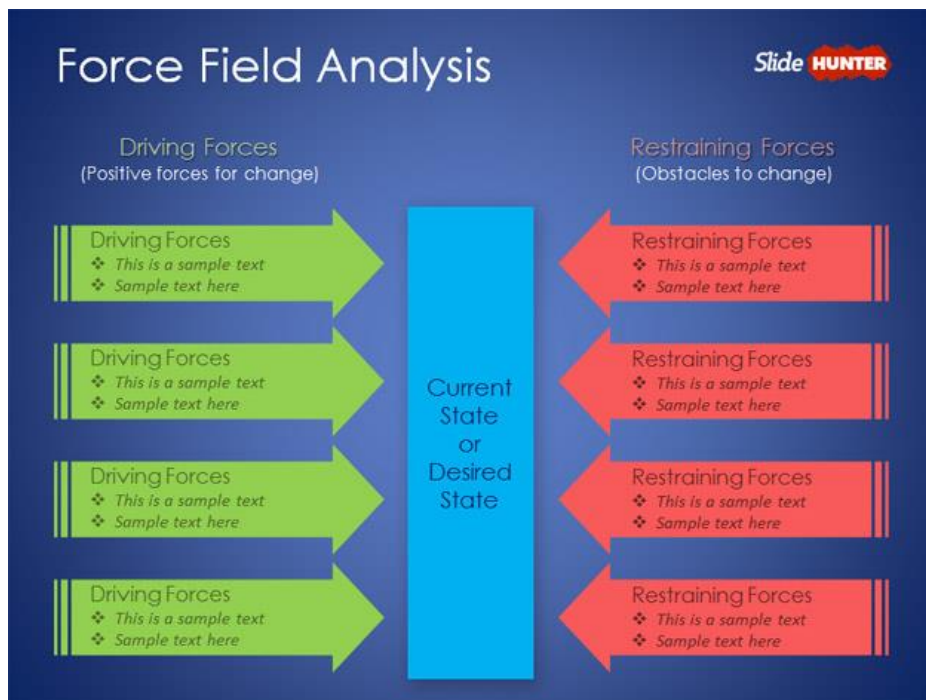
Appendix 3

Kubler Ross Change Curve



Appendix 4

Lewin's Force Field Analysis



Appendix 5

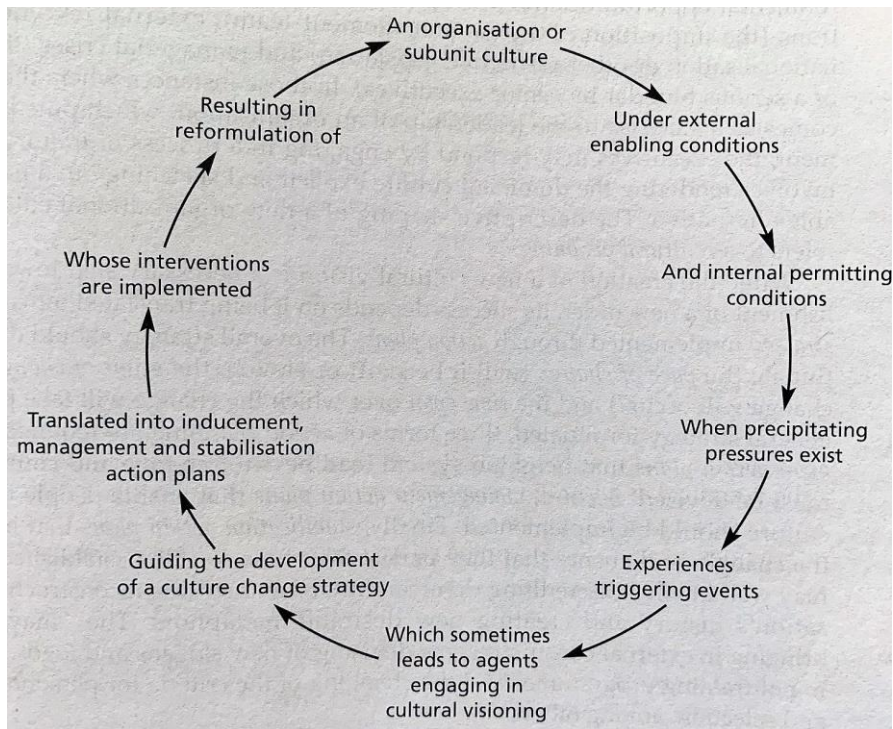
SWOT Analysis

S	W	O	T
STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
- Things your company does well - Qualities that separate you from your competitors - Internal resources such as skilled, knowledgeable staff - Tangible assets such as intellectual property, capital, proprietary technologies etc.	- Things your company lacks - Things your competitors do better than you - Resource limitations - Unclear unique selling proposition	- Underserved markets for specific products - Few competitors in your area - Emerging need for your products or services - Press/media coverage of your company	- Emerging competitors - Changing regulatory environment - Negative press/media coverage - Changing customer attitudes toward your company

WordStream

Appendix 6

Lundberg's model



Appendix 7

PESTLE Analysis

PEST Analysis

