

ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE CASE STUDY OF SHELL

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Executive Summary

Shell's market standing is characterised by the organisation's diversified corporate framework, international prominence, and steadfast strategic allocations in emerging energy sectors, with a focus on innovation and sustainable energy initiatives (*Disclaimer - Shell Annual Report 2020; Market Overview - Shell Annual Report and Accounts 2021; Market Overview - Shell Annual Report and Accounts 2022*).

This report critically examines some changes that Shell made during the COVID-19 pandemic with an assessment of their efficacy in upholding operational stability.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Shell PLC

Shell PLC stands as one of the largest global organisations that deals in providing oil and gas services through exploration, refining and production of crude oil and crude oil products.

The business operates in over 70 nations of the world with a workforce that surpasses over 103,000 employees and a capacity of about 4 million barrels of crude oil produced by 21 oil refineries in different parts of the world. The company operates under four major business lines: Integrated Gas, Upstream, Downstream and New Energies. The Integrated Gas sector focuses on producing and trading liquefied natural gas (LNG). The Upstream division handles the exploration, extraction, marketing, and transport of crude oil and gas. The Downstream sector produces lubricants and other petrochemicals. The New Energies division explores and invests in geothermal energy, technology, solar, hydroelectric, and other alternative energy sources (*Shell Sheds Light on New Energies Strategy amid Energy Transition*, n.d.).

The mission of this body of work is to critically examine the changes that Shell has undergone during the COVID-19 global pandemic and the efficiency of the overall operations of the business.

1.2 The COVID-19 Pandemic and Shell PLC

The COVID-19 pandemic, caused by the transmission of coronavirus, resulted in a worldwide health crisis and radical disruptions across many industries around the globe. Within the oil and gas sector, there was a significant plunge in demand globally which led to a surplus supply of crude oil products. This oversupply brought about major crashes in oil prices, plummeting below

\$20 per barrel, reaching the lowest point since 2001 (*Habib et al., 2021*). This in turn gave rise to job layoffs, reduced oil production and other major financial shifts within the oil and gas industry (*Oil's Journey from Worthless in the Pandemic to \$100 a Barrel | Reuters, n.d.*).

For Shell, this period marked a critical moment that prompted the simplification of operations, enhancement of efficiency and adaptation to the vision of a future where oil prices will be steadily low. This vision required enacting work from home policies, preserving cash in the short term while facing the risk of leaving valuable resources underutilized from 2025 to 2030, improving internal efficiencies, extending the economic shelf-life of assets, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions to sustain its business (*Shell Publishes Energy Transition Strategy 2024 | Shell Global*).

The COVID-19 pandemic pushed Shell to accelerate its digital transformation efforts, revealing a worldwide shortage of skilled software engineers crucial for these changes (Shell's Response to COVID-19 - Shell Sustainability Report, 2020). Shell's IT department recognized the need to provide business teams with user-friendly tools and technologies to boost productivity and innovation. As a result, the company adopted various management tools like Atlassian Jira and Microsoft DevOps for handling projects, organizing teams, and tracking progress. These tools are often paired with data visualization software like Tableau to improve performance and productivity reporting (*(PDF) How Shell Fueled Digital Transformation by Establishing DIY Software Development, 2023*).

Overall, the pandemic highlighted the necessity for Shell and similar companies to rethink and make many changes to their operations to ride out the long periods of low oil prices and to digitalise production methodologies.

CHAPTER TWO

CHANGE MANAGEMENT MODELS FOR INCREMENTAL AND LARGE-SCALE CHANGE PROGRAMMES IN SHELL DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Change management frameworks offer a clear and organized way to handle business transitions and transformations effectively. These frameworks help ensure that changes are implemented smoothly and used effectively.

Both planned and emergent change models have their benefits and disbenefits. Planned change models provide structure and clear instructions but may not be very flexible. Emergent change models are adaptable and responsive but can be harder to implement due to their less structured approach. Organizations should choose the model that best suits their specific situation, goals, and the type of change they are dealing with. Often, combining elements of both planned and emergent change models can be the most effective approach (*Van der Voet et al., 2016*).

2.1 Planned Change Models

2.1.1 Kotter's 8-Step Change Model

John Kotter developed a change management model that includes eight sequential steps: creating a sense of urgency, forming a strong guiding coalition, developing a vision and strategy, communicating the change vision, empowering broad-based action, generating short-term wins, consolidating gains to produce more change, and embedding new approaches into the culture (*Rajan & Ganesan, 2017*). This method emphasizes the importance of urgency, forming a powerful

alliance to drive change, eliminating obstacles, achieving quick wins, and reinforcing changes in the corporate culture.

This approach offers a detailed step-by-step guide and underscores the need for strong leadership and a clear vision. However, it can be time-consuming, expensive, and somewhat inflexible.

2.1.2 ADKAR Model

Prosci's ADKAR model centers on individual change management and comprises five essential milestones: Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, and Reinforcement. These stages represent the necessary steps for an individual to embrace and implement change successfully (*Goyal & Patwardhan, 2018*).

The ADKAR model highlights the human aspect of change and offers clear benchmarks for tracking progress. However, its highly structured nature can sometimes overlook broader organizational issues and may lack the flexibility needed to adapt to all contexts.

2.1.3 Lewin's Change Management Model

Kurt Lewin's model highlights three key stages of change: unfreezing, which involves challenging the current state; changing, where new behaviors and practices are adopted; and refreezing, where these new changes are established as the standard (*(PDF) Change Management Models: A Comparative Review, 2023*). While this model focuses on preparing for, implementing, and solidifying change, it operates on the assumption that change is a linear process, which might not be suitable for complex and dynamic environments. Additionally, it is less adaptable to ongoing and iterative changes.

2.1 Emergent Change Models

2.1.1 McKinsey 7-S Framework

The McKinsey 7-S framework, created by McKinsey & Company, focuses on seven interrelated elements essential for effective organizational change: strategy, structure, systems, shared values, skills, style, and staff ((PDF) *Change Management Models: A Comparative Review*, 2023). This approach looks at various dimensions of an organization and stresses the importance of aligning all these elements to achieve successful change. However, the model can be challenging to implement due to its lack of a clear, step-by-step process for navigating change.

2.1.2 The Agile Change Management Model

This model combines agile project management with change management techniques to help organizations respond swiftly and efficiently to changes ((PDF) *Agile Requirement Change Management Model for Global Software Development*). It works well in fast-paced and evolving environments, promoting step-by-step progress and adaptability. However, it can be difficult to manage without a clear plan for involving stakeholders and allocating resources.

2.1.3 The Satir Change Model

Virginia Satir's model describes five stages of change: status quo, foreign element, chaos, integration, and new status quo. It focuses on the emotional side of change and the needs of organizations going through it (Darcy & Kleiner, 1991; Gilley, Gilley, et al., 2009; Gilley, McMillan, et al., 2009; Goyal & Patwardhan, 2018; Mouazen & Hernández-Lara, 2024; (PDF) *Agile Requirement Change Management Model for Global Software Development*, n.d.; (PDF) *Change Management Models: A Comparative Review*, n.d.-a; (PDF) *Change Management*

Models: A Comparative Review, n.d.-b; Prato Previde & Rotondi, 1996; Van der Voet et al., 2016). This model acknowledges that change can be non-linear and chaotic, which might make it too abstract for practical use.

Structured models like Lewin's and ADKAR are good for managing small-scale changes because they provide clear, step-by-step guidance. In contrast, emergent models like McKinsey 7-S and Agile are better suited for adapting to feedback and staying aligned with organizational values ((PDF) *Change Management Models: A Comparative Review*, 2024).

Kotter's 8-Step Model offers a thorough method for handling complex, large-scale changes. The McKinsey 7-S Framework ensures that all parts of the organization are in sync, while the Agile Model provides flexibility and continuous adaptation, making it ideal for dynamic, large-scale transformations.

2.2 Incremental (Small-Scale) Change Programme Models as implemented in Shell

2.1.1 Lewin's Change Management Model

During the COVID-19 pandemic, organizations swiftly enacted new strategies to maintain operations. A comprehensive remote work policy was introduced for administrative staff to ensure business continuity while adhering to social distancing measures. This shift required significant adjustments in organizational practices and security protocols. Enhanced cybersecurity measures were implemented across business divisions, including advanced technologies and secure communication channels (Strategic Resilience during the COVID-19 Crisis | McKinsey, 2024). Updates to existing routines and policies were necessary to align with

the remote working environment. Continuous training and support were provided to aid in the transition, emphasizing the importance of cybersecurity. This approach follows the 'unfreeze', 'change', and 'freeze' model of organizational change, ensuring a smooth transition and maintaining business continuity during disruption.

2.1.2 ADKAR Model

Shell utilized the ADKAR change management model to roll out upgraded safety measures across its operational sites, prioritizing employee health and safety (*Our Approach to Safety - Shell Sustainability Report, 2020*). Here's how Shell applied each step of the ADKAR model:

1. **Awareness:** Shell implemented a comprehensive communication strategy to inform all employees about the new safety protocols. This involved detailed briefings, informational posters, emails, and updates on internal platforms, emphasizing the critical role of these measures in preventing COVID-19 spread.
2. **Desire:** Shell encouraged compliance with the new safety protocols by highlighting their direct benefits to employees and their families, including reduced infection risks and a safe working environment. Additionally, Shell shared success stories and expert insights to reinforce the effectiveness of the protocols and introduced incentives for compliance.
3. **Knowledge:** Shell provided extensive training on the new safety protocols through virtual sessions, instructional videos, and written guidelines. Clear instructions were given on proper hygiene practices, personal protective equipment (PPE) use, social distancing measures, and symptom reporting, ensuring employees understood how to implement these measures effectively.

4. **Ability:** Shell ensured employees had the ability to follow the new safety protocols by providing necessary resources and support. This included distributing personal protective equipment, installing handwashing stations, and reconfiguring workspaces for social distancing. Health monitoring systems, such as temperature checks and regular screenings, were also established to assist employees in adhering to the protocols.
5. **Reinforcement:** Shell implemented ongoing monitoring and feedback systems to reinforce adherence to the new safety protocols. Regular inspections and audits were conducted to ensure compliance, and employee feedback was actively sought and addressed. Shell also introduced a recognition program to reward teams and individuals who consistently followed the protocols, reinforcing their importance. Continuous communication from leadership about the success and importance of the protocols helped maintain high levels of compliance and commitment. By applying the ADKAR model, Shell was able to effectively implement and sustain enhanced safety protocols during the COVID-19 pandemic. This structured approach ensured that employees were informed, motivated, trained, equipped, and continually encouraged to follow the new measures, thereby maintaining a safe working environment and minimizing the risk of COVID-19 transmission at operational sites.

2.1.3 McKinsey 7-S Framework

Shell employed the McKinsey 7-S change management model to overhaul operations, strategy, culture, and technology. Here's how Shell implemented each 7-S element and the outcomes:

1. **Strategy:** Shell redirected its focus toward renewable energy and low-carbon technologies, aiming for net-zero emissions by 2050 with annual investments of \$2-3 billion by 2025 (*Shell Energy Transition Strategy | Shell Global, 2024*).
 2. **Structure:** Shell flattened hierarchies and empowered regional teams for faster decision-making tailored to local market dynamics and customer needs.
 3. **Systems:** Digital tools like Microsoft Teams were deployed for seamless remote collaboration, enhancing operational efficiency and decision-making (*(PDF) How Shell Fueled Digital Transformation by Establishing DIY Software Development, 2023*).
 4. **Shared Values:** Shell prioritized safety, integrity, and innovation, implementing strict health protocols and fostering a culture of continuous improvement.
 5. **Skills:** Employees received virtual training and upskilling initiatives to adapt to the evolving business environment.
 6. **Staff:** Flexible work policies and mental health resources supported remote work arrangements and employee well-being.
 7. **Style:** Shell's leadership embraced transparency, empathy, and agility, making quick decisions and adjustments in response to changing market conditions (*(PDF) How Shell Fueled Digital Transformation by Establishing DIY Software Development, 2024*).
- Overall, Shell's application of the McKinsey 7-S model during COVID-19 drove transformation across multiple areas, enhancing operational resilience and positioning for long-term success.

2.4 Large-Scale Change Programmes as implemented in Shell

2.4.1 Kotter's 8-Step Change Model

1. **Urgency:** Shell recognized the critical need to adapt swiftly to pandemic-induced challenges, conveying the urgency through internal communication channels *((PDF) How Shell Fueled Digital Transformation by Establishing DIY Software Development, 2024)*.

2. **Coalition:** A diverse task force was assembled to drive change, ensuring expertise and resources were available for effective implementation.

3. **Vision:** Shell developed a clear vision emphasizing resilience, innovation, and sustainability, communicated through strategic sessions and corporate communications.

4. **Communication:** Targeted messaging and engagement efforts ensured understanding and commitment to the vision among employees and stakeholders *(Digitalisation Research | Shell Global, 2024)*.

5. **Remove obstacles:** Shell identified and addressed barriers to change, streamlining processes and providing support to overcome resistance.

6. **Short-term wins:** Achievements such as successful remote work implementation and digital adoption were celebrated, building momentum for further change.

7. **Build on change:** Shell continued to invest in capabilities and infrastructure, sustaining momentum and driving continuous improvement.

8. **Anchor in culture:** Changes were embedded into Shell's culture by aligning incentives and fostering a culture of innovation and adaptability. Leadership role-modeling and communication reinforced the desired cultural shift.

2.5.2 The Agile Change Management Model

1. Iterative Planning and Execution: Shell swiftly implemented remote work policies, refining them based on feedback. Agile methodologies like Scrum and Kanban were used, enabling over 80% of the workforce to work remotely ((PDF) *How Shell Fueled Digital Transformation by Establishing DIY Software Development*, 2024).

2. Flexibility and Adaptability: Facing a decline in oil demand, Shell shifted towards renewable energy, planning to invest \$2-3 billion annually in renewable projects by 2025.

3. Cross-Functional Collaboration: Multidisciplinary teams addressed supply chain disruptions collaboratively, improving operational efficiency and resilience (Strategic Resilience during the COVID-19 Crisis | McKinsey, 2024).

4. Customer-Centricity: Shell launched digital initiatives like the Shell Go+ app, enhancing customer experience and loyalty in the energy market.

5. Continuous Learning and Improvement: Shell invested in employee training, offering online courses via the Learning Hub platform to foster innovation and adaptability.

2.6 Identifying and Dealing with Resistance Factors to Change During COVID-19 in Shell

Identifying resistance to change within Shell during the COVID-19 era involves a systematic approach that combines qualitative and quantitative methods to understand employee attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions (Bin Saeed et al., 2019; de Lucas Ancillo et al., 2021; Fisher, 2010; Gill, 2019; (PDF) *Workplace Change within the COVID-19 Context: A Grounded Theory Approach*, n.d.; Pfeffer, 2010). These methods can also be used to track change and determine when change has been implemented. There were several ways this was done in Shell.

1. **Employee Surveys and Feedback:** Shell conducted surveys to gauge employee sentiment about remote work, tailoring initiatives based on concerns.
2. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Focus groups addressed resistance among frontline workers, fostering ownership of change.
3. **Performance Metrics:** Productivity metrics and key performance indicators aided the identification of areas of resistance to remote work, guiding targeted interventions.
4. **Cultural Assessments:** Tools like OCAI pinpointed cultural barriers, enabling Shell to foster a more adaptive culture ((PDF) *THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT IN CREATION OF A SUCCESSFUL ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURAL CHANGE*, 2024). Despite facing resistance, Shell addressed challenges in various areas:

- **Remote Work Implementation:** Some employees resisted remote work due to concerns about productivity and career advancement. Shell provided support and flexible arrangements to ease the transition.
- **Strategic Shift Towards Renewable Energy:** Stakeholders raised concerns about the financial viability of renewable energy projects. Shell engaged in dialogue and transparency efforts to build trust and support.
- **Supply Chain Disruptions:** Resistance in the supply chain stemmed from reluctance to adopt new processes and technologies. Shell implemented collaborative initiatives and capacity-building programs to enhance resilience and agility.

Conclusion

During the pandemic, Shell implemented significant modifications to ensure operational continuity, focusing primarily on remote work, renewable energy initiatives, and addressing supply chain disruptions.

Initially, Shell swiftly instituted remote work policies globally to sustain business operations and prioritize employee safety. Surveys indicated that approximately 80% of Shell's workforce transitioned to remote work successfully, facilitating operational continuity while safeguarding employee well-being.

Moreover, Shell intensified its commitment to renewable energy, announcing plans to allocate \$2-3 billion annually to renewable energy projects by 2025. This strategic shift aimed to establish Shell as a frontrunner in sustainable energy and enhance the diversity of its energy sources.

Additionally, Shell dedicated efforts to rectify supply chain challenges stemming from the pandemic, such as port closures and workforce shortages. Through measures like supplier training and proactive planning, Shell effectively mitigated disruptions, ensuring timely delivery of products and services.

In conclusion, these strategic adjustments enabled Shell to navigate the pandemic's challenges effectively. However, continuous monitoring and adaptability remain imperative to address evolving circumstances. Vigilance regarding market trends, regulatory changes, and stakeholder expectations will empower Shell to make informed decisions and sustain its success amidst dynamic environments.

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