

## CHANGE READINESS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE MANAGEMENT - A CASE FOR AN INDUSTRY FOOD ORGANIZATION FROM ROMANIA

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**ABSTRACT:** *Organizations worldwide face intense competition because of changes in their work processes, products, and services. Employee willingness and behavioral and attitudinal changes are key to adapting to change. The successful implementation of change is contingent upon the organization's readiness for change. The food sector in Romania is constantly changing due to a combination of external factors such as industry and market trends, governmental laws, and customer expectations. Under these circumstances, project management and change management become essential to the success of businesses in this industry. The industry urgently needs to improve its current performance to increase productivity and satisfy project clients' complex and varying needs. This study scrutinizes an organization's readiness for change, focusing on the dimensions of change effectiveness and commitment. It draws from a comprehensive survey conducted among staff members, which examined crucial factors such as employee attitudes toward change. These attitudes perceived organizational support, communication effectiveness, and leadership involvement play a pivotal role in successful change management. They are not just components but the driving force behind a competitive edge through the high performance of their employees.*

**Keywords:** *organizational culture, organizational performance, change management, organizational change, organizational readiness for change, change efficacy, change commitment.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Overseeing the change process is as crucial as the change itself. Employee willingness and behavioral and attitude changes are key to adapting to change. Changes implemented within an organization will eventually affect its systems, job responsibilities, procedures, and organizational structure. Various businesses engage in various actions to obtain the desired level of success. Many organizations struggle to adapt to changes in the unpredictable world of the economy despite being forced to make adjustments to survive (Varun & William, 1997).

Successful change management can improve the organization's overall performance and operations. Effective change management may provide significant value to the organization and may even become a prerequisite for a certain occupation.

Creating a sense of urgency to highlight the need for change, presenting people with data and evidence to convince them of the need for change, choosing the right individuals to form the guiding coalition, enlisting their support as a team, formulating a clear and concrete plan for change, building practical delivery methods, altering systems that stand in the way of the altered vision, recruiting, developing, and assuring the right people are chosen are all part of managing changes (Hemamalini, 2001).

Organizations are always changing, and this change is happening faster. Consequently, the ability to implement organizational transformation has evolved into a crucial strategic requirement. Organizations, to successfully implement the change management program, must achieve the desired objectives and improve the performance of an organization through different change management practices, addressing the human side systematically, involving everyone, communicating the vision, ensuring commitment from within, creating a clear and tangible vision for change, minimizing resistances to change and selecting the right people to guide alliance.

Leadership sets the direction, project managers handle the technical aspects of the change, and staff implements the changes. The core principle of change management is that how change is communicated can influence people's capacity to adapt. Their capacity to adapt to the change may be hindered if they reject it or misunderstand it, which could lead to recurring issues. If people are aware of the benefits of a change, they are more likely to support it and see it through to the end, which will lessen any bad consequences for the organization. Particularly, these variables would primarily decide an organization's performance; factors influencing organizational performance in this study will include organizational culture and employee motivation.

Top-level management will be the primary users of the study's results since they must understand how change preparedness affects an organization's performance and what other elements outside change management also affect an organization's overall performance. The study may offer pertinent data to help employees and managers at different levels comprehend the elements that must come together for change management to be implemented successfully and improve organizational performance. Employees may also benefit from the study's findings since their involvement in the change program's management can foster their creativity and increase their awareness of various challenges. The various modifications to the change management can meet the community's needs in various ways. Therefore, society can also benefit from this study. The study may also be consulted for future research as a source of literature.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizations must adopt new management techniques in the 21st century, which include qualities like a quality mindset, stakeholder focus, speed orientation, innovativeness,

flat structures, and cross-functionality (Wind & Maine, 1999). After the change has been accepted by senior management, it must be executed by middle and lower management. The degree to which individuals are cognitively and emotionally inclined to accept, embrace, and adopt a particular plan to alter the status quo purposefully is meant to be meant by readiness for change (Holt et al., 2007). Organizational members' commitment to change and their level of self-efficacy in implementing change is referred to as organizational readiness for change (Weiner, 2009).

Change readiness is influenced by shared cognitive beliefs that change is needed, that the work group or organization has the capability to successfully undertake change, and that change will have positive outcomes for the work group or organization and, at the same time by positive to an organizational change (Rafferty et al., 2013).

The ability to accept any new technology before its adoption has typically been measured using the term "readiness" (Bendi, 2017). However, the notion lacks a single definition because its meaning varies according to users, context, and circumstances (Tran et al., 2011; Luo and Goulding, 2010). The attitudes of change receivers and their ability to effectively plan, manage, and execute organizational change are crucial to the success of any initiative aimed at enhancing or transforming an organization (Anwar, 2017).

Implementing new procedures, processes, or policies that immediately impact the different stakeholders in a company is a common example of diverse alterations. Change management can succeed when the potential effects of the change initiatives on these stakeholders are recognized. A moral workplace culture boosts workers' emotional investment, sense of purpose, willingness to refer others, and overall job happiness. Organizational commitment has been linked to readiness for change. Visagie and Steyn (2011) investigated the relationship between employee attitudes toward change and organizational commitment levels and how employees view the change process.

Shifts in leadership have the potential to impact employee performance. A knowledgeable and competent leader may manage a company or the organizational transformation process more effectively and successfully (Abbas & Asghar, 2010). It is undisputable that for change to become successful, the organization's leaders must also be committed and engaged.

According to Hans, Lawrence, and Andreas (2009), change management techniques in project or business operations have not substantially been uptake. When implemented effectively, change management techniques can provide businesses with observable advantages. The project success percentage of practitioners who strictly adhered to formal, defined change management procedures was 52%. In contrast, practitioners who adapt their methods based on the circumstances only achieved a 36% success rate.

Given how the business landscape is evolving, it is crucial to give more people the tools they need to become more powerful. Thus, management's involvement in a change project is as significant as that of the staff and project workers. On the other hand, managers also need to understand the value of allowing staff members to take their time, discover the organization's shortcomings independently, and ultimately look for and create solutions for a brighter future.

A shared understanding of an organization's objectives and direction can be achieved through communication. To convince everyone in the organization to make a change, there needs to be open and honest communication regarding the data, statistics, and supporting documentation. More than ever, workers need to know where they stand and what's coming up in very unstructured tasks. Resources might be allotted to completing secondary tasks instead of crucial phases and actions if not. The capacity to explain to staff members the kinds of changes the plan would undoubtedly bring about to each person's duties, functions, and working environment is a crucial component of successfully managing change.

According to Fatima, Alyaa, and Abdul Rahman (2013), people typically oppose change, so overcoming their objections and grabbing their attention by emphasizing how the change will contribute to their success and long-term development is crucial in building the governing coalition. Obtaining support from top management, potential stakeholders, and the organization is a prerequisite for the change manager. Implementing a change management program is not a simple task, nor should it be considered a "fast fix". Rationalize, educate, and provide change management training to employees to lessen resistance to planned change. This realization has always been necessary to break old patterns, but it now requires additional caution.

According to Daniel (1999), organizational culture is the collection of management practices and behaviors representing and upholding the fundamental values, ideas, and principles that form the basis of an organization's management system. According to Fred (2011), an organization's culture is its members' collective collection of values, norms, and beliefs that shape their attitudes, thoughts, and actions. Culture has more to do with an organization's informal than formal characteristics. They concentrate on how each member of the organization's values, beliefs, and conventions contribute to shared collective meanings. The need to comprehend and function more successfully within this unofficial sphere of teachers, support staff members, and other stakeholders' values and views is why culture is becoming increasingly important.

Depending on the circumstances, distinct organizational cultures may more or less support organizational change. The significance and evaluation of organizational culture's role and impact on change management cannot be overstated since an organization's culture can harm its overall performance (Song, 2011). In summary, controlling organizational culture or even modifying the approach to account for the culture in change management must be considered.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted on randomly selected employees, including team, middle, and top-level managers. To accomplish the goal of this study, a quantitative survey design was developed to investigate the direct and indirect effect of each predictor variable on the criterion variable. The study aimed to evaluate the organization's readiness for change and its impact on organizational performance, using a questionnaire-type opinion poll as a research tool by examining the relationship among change management practices, employees' motivation, organizational culture, and the performance of an organization. The population of the study was the employees of the organization. The representative sample of this study consisted of subsets of the population, which allowed the study results to be generalized. The sample population's characteristics were intended to represent the target population.

A five-point Likert scale questionnaire was used for data collection and divided into six parts. The participants rated five possible alternatives, and the following numeric values were assigned to the positively phrased questions: Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neutral = 3, Disagree = 2, and Strongly Disagree = 1. All these items were used to determine the effect of change management practices on organizational performance and investigate the effects and relationships of employees' motivation and organizational culture on organizational performance.

The questionnaire was structured in seven sections. Thus, the first section intended to identify demographic data specific to the study participants, and the second section included five particular items related to how the organization supports change. The third section seeks to identify, through the five established items, how the respondents participating in the study understand the process of change in the organization; following that, in the fourth section, the

process of achieving the change is evaluated by identifying the style of communication of the change and the managerial support offered to facilitate the change. The fifth section focused on the employees' reactions to the change, and the items specific to the organizational culture and the organization's performance are analyzed in the final sections of the questionnaire.

This research examined the impact of organizational culture and employee motivation on an organization's overall performance and the implications of change preparedness on an organization's performance. The general objective of the research is to evaluate the organization's preparation for change and its impact on organizational performance. At the same time, the specific goals of the study aimed at: i) identifying the level of readiness of the organization for change, ii) evaluating employees' perceptions of the organization's ability to manage change, and iii) analyzing the relationship between change preparation and organizational performance. Thus, to fulfill the research's general objective and specific objectives, the following research hypothesis was established: Between the level of readiness for change identified at the level of the organization and organizational performance, there is a positive correlation.

The results obtained after collecting the questionnaires were processed and analyzed using the statistical program IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 26.0. Armonk, NY: IBM Corp.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A sample of 124 employees from different departments and levels of the business filled out the questionnaire. Table 1 below shows the frequency distribution of the responses by age, service year in the company, and position within the organization.

**Table 1. Demographic information of participants of the study**

<b>Biography</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Age</b>		
<34 years	34	27.4%
35-44 years	29	23.4%
45-54 years	46	37.1%
55+ years	15	12.1%
<b>Service year in this organization</b>		
<3 year	19	15.3%
3-5 years	27	21.8%
5-10 years	45	36.3%
>10 years	33	26.6%
<b>Position</b>		
Team manager	36	29.0%
Middle level	49	39.5%
Top-level	39	31.5%

Source: author's processing

Table 1 above illustrates the frequency distribution of the respondents by age, showing that most of them (N= 46, 37.1%) were in the age category of 45 to 54 years. This category is the age group that can support and realize change ideas in the organization. Table 1 also indicates that the largest group (N=45, 36.3%) of the respondents had more than five years and less than ten years of service.

The first step in analyzing the research results was verifying the questionnaire's reliability. Thus, using the Alpha Cronbach coefficient, the questionnaire's items' internal

consistency was examined for the entire scale and each of its sections to conduct a reliability study and constructive validation (Table 2). The study's findings indicate an alpha coefficient of 0.979. The analysis of each part demonstrates strong intercorrelation between selected intimates, which displayed a fluctuation of the coefficient between 0.741 and 0.953.

**Table 2. Descriptive analysis of the viability questionnaire**

Domains	No. of item	Cronbach`s Alpha	Mean	Variance
Support change	5	.900	18.6129	24.825
Understand change	5	.864	18.3226	23.570
Realize change	6	.912	22.2258	31.851
Employee Motivation	6	.895	21.1935	32.418
Organizational Culture	8	.953	29.0968	65.194
Financial Performance	4	.741	13.7097	14.191

Source: author's processing

To analyze the change readiness at the level of the organization participating in the study, several essential aspects of this process were taken into account, including how the management of the organization supports the change, the understanding of the change among employees but also among management and effectively the process of achieving change, but also the role of organizational culture. The items included in the questionnaire and the descriptive statistics in the form of minimum, maximum, average, standard deviation, and standard error are presented in Table 3. The minimum values of the scores obtained for the questionnaire sections are in the range of 1.40 – 1.83, while the maximum value is 5.00 for all six sections. We notice that the section with the highest average obtained from a statistical point of view is the one that aimed at the support of the change, obtaining the value of 3.72.

Analyzing the answers of each section individually, the highest scores in supporting change were the items that refer to the existence of encouragement and the constant adoption of new and better working methods within the organization, as well as whether company employees receive assistance to achieve when change is necessary to take advantage of new opportunities. On the same note, for a good understanding of changes, it was a stated agreement that the change team includes members with significant positional influence, a wide range of skills, and a high degree of trust. To realize the change, imperative or not, the study participants stated that various departments of the companies frequently work together to bring change.

**Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the questionnaire`s items**

Domains	N statistic	Rage Statistic	Minimum Statistic	Maximum Statistic	Mean Statistic	Std. Error
Support change	124	3.60	1.40	5.00	3.7226	0.8949
Understand change	124	3.40	1.60	5.00	3.6645	0.8720
Realize change	124	3.50	1.50	5.00	3.7048	0.8441
Employee Motivation	124	3.17	1.83	5.00	3.5319	0.8527
Organizational Culture	124	3.37	1.63	5.00	3.6394	0.9065
Financial Performance	124	3.43	1.80	5.00	3.4387	0.8225

Source: author's processing

The employees' perception of organizational change, in a context where the company is well prepared for change, the change teams are competent, and the process is well supported and communicated, is generally positive, as also results from the scores of the items regarding this aspect. This situation creates a conducive framework for adopting change, reducing the resistance and uncertainty that can arise in such processes. The correlation between the analyzed variables explains the strength and direction of the relationship between them based on the measurement of the correlation coefficient. The most used statistical correlation coefficient is the Pearson, which measures the relationship between two variables. Regarding the correlation relationship at the level of the items analyzed by the questionnaire sections, a positive correlation can be observed at the level of all the analyzed sections. A positive and strong correlation is evident between the specific items of supporting change and understanding change, as well as between supporting change and achieving change. At the same time, organizational culture has a positive and directly proportional relationship with supporting change ( $r = 0.826$ ) and employee motivation ( $r = 0.800$ ).

**Table 4. Pearson correlations**

Domains	Support change	Understand change	Realize change	Employee Motivation	Organizational Culture	Financial Performance
Support change	1	<b>.820**</b>	<b>.882**</b>	.728**	<b>.826**</b>	.770**
Understand change		1	<b>.866**</b>	.633**	.687**	.772**
Realize change			1	.701**	.747**	<b>.802**</b>
Employee Motivation				1	.800*	.649**
Organizational Culture					1	.769**
Financial Performance						1

**\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

An important role of these statistical correlations is understanding the relationship between the study variables in order to validate the research hypotheses. As can be seen between the achievement of change and financial performance, there is a strong and positive dependency relationship ( $r=0.802$ ), thus validating this study's research hypothesis.

During the assessment of change readiness in the organization studied, the culture of supporting and realizing change seems to be the major factor leading towards the right direction and achieving organizational performance. Awareness of why the change is needed and a high level of commitment, communication, and participation at all managerial levels are critical to the success of the change process.

Similar studies have also highlighted that the way change is carried out in the organization impacts organizational performance. Thus, the positive impact of change is reflected in employee confidence, organizational growth, and competitive advantage (Asikhia et al., 2021). At the same time, Nwinyokpugi (2018) highlights the link between change communication, change identification, and employee involvement with employee productivity and recommends implementing changes from top management to employees clearly and consistently. Therefore, preparation for organizational change is an important factor in stimulating innovation and implementing new projects and can influence the organization's financial performance.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

An efficient approach to change management involves methodically arranging every individual to directly affect the attitudes and behaviors of employees in a way that helps the organization realize its competitive goal. Managers and other leaders have a significant impact on employees' behavior in the workplace, which makes them crucial agents of change and its administration.

Organizational change readiness and competent teams provide reassurance that the management change process is well managed, which can reduce anxiety and fears about change. Effective communication and constant support make employees feel part of the process and are more motivated to contribute to the implementation of change actively. When change is well planned and supported, employees will perceive less discomfort and uncertainty, reducing the tendency to resist change. Even if the change involves adjustments, the support provided and the clarity of the process communicated help employees see the change as an opportunity, not a threat. In conclusion, in such a setting, employee perception will be predominantly positive, facilitating a smoother transition and successful implementation of organizational change.

Any change within an organization is not an easy task for the organization or its employees. Initially, employee resistance is the main factor for change implementation, and obviously, this resistance will impact employee performance. Organizations cannot change anything without the involvement of employees. Employee readiness is the key to successfully adapting organizational change for the efficient growth of the organization. Change management can be implemented through employee willingness to change their behavior and attitude through training and to motivate them to come out of their comfort zone for organizational change. Leadership role plays an important role in implementing organizational change. Leaders can create a supportive and friendly environment for the employees where they can easily participate in decision-making or other organizational matters; when employee morals remain high, the better their performance will be and the same way they will never hesitate to adopt the change or be ready themselves for any kind of organizational change. Organizational change can be made possible in the way the firm needs by getting the employees' willingness first for a change and then getting employees' confidence for their readiness for change. Ultimately, this is going to impact employee performance, organizational growth, and productivity.

Further research on change management is needed to gain a wider perspective on the food industry in Romania, involving other organizations with similar superior financial and non-financial performances.

In conclusion, assessing change readiness for organizational change management in a Romanian food industry organization is critical to ensure successful transformation. The process involves evaluating internal and external factors that impact the organization's ability to adapt and implement change effectively. Internally, this includes assessing the organization's culture, leadership, employee engagement, and available resources. Externally, market trends, regulatory requirements, and economic conditions within Romania and the broader European context play a significant role.

Moreover, Romania's food industry faces unique challenges, such as fluctuating demand, regulatory shifts related to EU food safety standards, and evolving consumer preferences. These challenges must be factored into the readiness assessment to align the change initiatives with broader industry trends.

Successful change readiness assessment ultimately leads to more informed decision-making, tailored change strategies, and a greater likelihood of achieving long-term sustainability and competitiveness within the Romanian food sector.

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