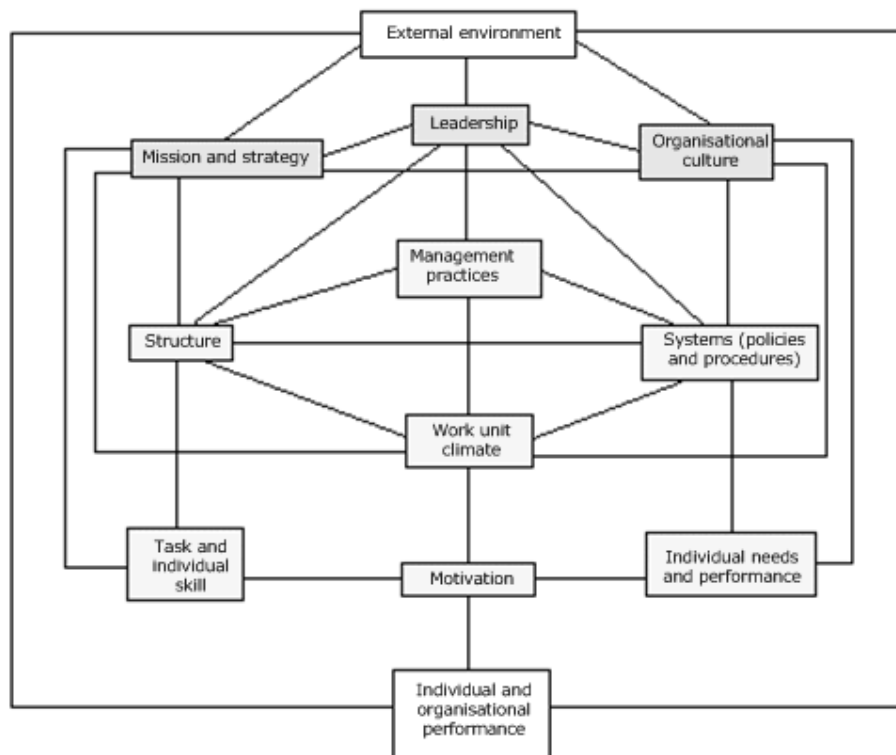


Burke-Litwin: Understanding Drivers for Change

There are many reasons that change occurs in organisations. Building on the Burke-Litwin model of organisational change and performance, this article will help you identify different drivers of change and consider the implications for you as a change manager.

The Model

The Burke-Litwin model[1] shows the various drivers of change and ranks them in terms of importance. The model is expressed diagrammatically, with the most important factors featuring at the top. The lower layers become gradually less important. The model argues that all of the factors are integrated (to greater or lesser degrees). Therefore, a change in one will eventually affect all other factors.



The Burke-Litwin model

Burke-Litwin believe environmental factors to be the most important driver for change. Indeed, most change can be traced back to external drivers for change.

Important elements of organisational success, such as mission and strategy, leadership and organisational culture, are often impacted by changes that originate outside the organisation. It is your job to understand these external changes and identify the implications for you and your team.

Identifying and Dealing with Drivers for Change

1. External Environment

This includes such factors as markets, legislation, competition and the economy. All of these will have consequences for organisations, and, as a change manager, it is vital that you

continually scan the environment for issues that will affect you and your team. For example, in the world of accountancy, International Accounting Standards and International Financial Reporting Standards will have a significant impact on the way companies manage their accounts and report their results. In the public sector, legislative changes across health, local government and other services have a direct impact on the work organisations are required to carry out.

2. Mission and Strategy

An organisation's mission articulates its reason for existing. It is the foundation upon which all activity should be built. The strategy then sets out, in broad terms, how the organisation will go about achieving its mission. Very often, the strategy will be developed in light of environmental change, and will have a significant impact on the work you do. As a change manager, you need to understand change in strategy and be able to communicate the implications to your staff.

3. Leadership

This considers the attitudes and behaviour of senior colleagues and how these behaviours are perceived by the organisation as a whole. The way in which change is implemented and accepted through the organisation will be largely influenced by the top team. Does your team believe that senior colleagues are committed to change, or is it just another initiative that will disappear in six month's time?

4. Organisation Culture

Organisation culture can be described as "the way we do things around here". It considers the beliefs, behaviours, values and conventions that prevail in an organisation. Culture change does not happen overnight. It evolves over time as a result of many other changes in the organisation. As a manager, you should keep in mind the desired state for the organisation, in terms of how you expect people to behave (and not to behave), and what your organisation values as important. You need to ensure that your behaviour fits with these expectations at all times, and that you 'walk the walk'.

5. Structure

Very often, changes in strategy can lead to changes in the way the organisation is structured. This can impact on relationships, responsibilities and ways of working. Your job is to assess the impact of the structural change and ensure your team understands why it is required, and what it means for them.

6. Work Unit Climate

This considers employees' perception of their immediate colleagues and working environment. Our immediate working environment is often what shapes our view of the organisation as a whole, and influences the extent to which we feel satisfied in our jobs. Changes to the immediate working environment need to be managed sensitively, as they are likely to invoke a range of emotional and political responses from staff. This is particularly the case where change involves moving location, a change in personnel, or a change in terms of conditions of service, such as working hours.

7. Task Requirements and Individual Skills/Abilities

Change at a higher level in the organisation will often require changes in the work carried out and the skills available in the team. As the change manager you need to assess whether: all the right skills are in place; if they can be developed; or, if you need to bring them in from outside the team.

8. Individual Needs and Values

Changes to team membership can mean a change in the team dynamic. In a perfect world, we would be able to recruit the exact fit for our teams, in terms of personal style, abilities and skills mix. However, in reality it is not always possible, and it is your job to identify any risks in this areas and mitigate them as best you can.

9. Employee Motivation

Considers the significance of individual and organisational goals. Motivation is key to effective change. The real challenge is to maintain motivation throughout a change project, particularly when change is often not well-received by those affected.

[1] Burke & Litwin, '*A Causal Model of Organisation Performance and Change*', *Journal of Management*, Vol 18, No 3 (1992), pp 523–545.