

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE AND MANAGEMENT

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IMPACT OF CULTURE ON HUMAN RESISTANCE – A STUDY OF COMPANIES IMPLEMENTING KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

MADHUSUDAN.V

DIRECTOR
SIEMENS PRODUCT LIFECYCLE MANAGEMENT
RESEARCH SCHOLAR, PES INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
BANGALORE – 560 052

NAGALINGAPPA.G
DIRECTOR AND PROFESSOR
BNM INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
BANASHANKARI III STAGE
BANGALORE - 560 085

ABSTRACT

Managing knowledge as corporate assets is important for every organization today. Many organizations actively consider implementing technologies like Portals, Product lifecycle management and custom built Knowledge Management software. A successful Knowledge management implementation involves setting up the right process and managing the people in the organization to share their knowledge in the process.

This paper looks into challenges involved in people sharing their knowledge and the resistance to change towards an enterprise centric knowledge management system. A study is conducted amongst companies that had implemented solutions in the knowledge management domain, to understand the reasons and factors behind resistance to change in people involved in adopting a Knowledge Management software application in their organization. This research investigates the relationship between cultural background and its impact on the degree of resistance and the expressive nature of resistance. A survey was conducted amongst 86 software users, between the age group of 20 to 60. The ANOVA results of the study show that resistance is common irrespective of the culture, however people in the east demonstrate a passive form of resistance while people in the west are expressive in their resistance and show a more active form.

The study therefore suggests a need for a culture specific approach towards implementation of knowledge management applications in India. This study intends to incorporate the learning towards a definition of a comprehensive software implementation methodology.

KEYWORDS

Knowledge Management, Change Resistance, Indian Ethos, Change Management

INTRODUCTION

Many organizations today consider implementation of software as a driver for knowledge management in their organization and bringing about a change in the organization. It is not just the technology that is being implemented, but processes are re-engineered and people are reorganized to perform better in the organization. Processes are made more agile and lean to the requirements of business needs and non-value added activities of people are removed, so as to maximize the output of the human intellectual and make them focus on their core activities.

A knowledge management system involves a process of both sharing knowledge and an inquiring mind to extract the knowledge relevant to his requirement, apart from an external environment created for facilitating this process.

The success of a knowledge management software implementation depends a lot on people adopting and accepting this new process and technology. Many times, delay or failure in software implementation is attributed to "Resistance to change" from people in the organization. Resistance can be a creative outburst and principled to get more from the system. It is an indication of a healthy mechanism at work. All resistance is not always bad. Unknown, unanticipated, unaddressed resistance may not be desirable. A poor implementation process of software can also lead to resistance. Understanding the type of resistance and mitigating same appropriately is very essential for any successful knowledge management implementation..

The aim of this study is to review the existing literature in the domain of resistance to change and understand why people resist change in a knowledge management implementation. Our study also investigated the impact of cultural background on resistance to change, and dealt with the pattern in the expressiveness of resistance between cultures. Our study is focused on an Indian environment and we intended to study the gap and discover the need to apply culture specific philosophies, specifically the relevance of ancient Indian philosophies to manage this human behavior towards resistance to sharing knowledge.

THEORY AND HYPOTHESIS

Many Studies have been done in this area of resistance to change. We reviewed the available literature in the areas of change management, organizational change management, organization citizenship, leadership management, emotional Intelligence, spiritual Intelligence, organization culture and basic human behavior related to resistance. Existing literature was reviewed from India and other regions on managing human behavior.

CHANGE RESISTANCE STUDIES

Resistance to change has been long perceived as a barrier to organizational change attempts. Connor (1993) stated that "resistance at its most obvious is a slow motion response to meet agreements or even a complete refusal to cooperate with change. In an organization, resistance is opposition or withholding of support for specific plans or ideas. It can be intentional or unintentional, covert or overt". Some have also classified the resistance into active and passive.

Change resistance may behave in many forms from a passive resistance to active or even aggressive resistance (Coetsee, 1999), but there is no doubt that any form of resistance will deter the change process.

The World, since long, gave much importance to Intelligence Quotient (IQ). Then in mid-1990s, Daniel Goleman discovered the findings in neuroscience and psychology based on importance of Emotional Quotient (EQ) an ability to respond skillfully to pleasure and pain keeping in mind the feelings others and himself. Many studies have also been done on applying concepts of Emotional intelligence towards managing people. Zohar and Marshall (2000) introduced the term spiritual intelligence. Spiritual intelligence is concerned with the inner life of mind and spirit and its relationship to being in the world. It implies a capacity for a deep understanding of existential questions and insight into multiple levels of consciousness.

Passive resistance is a method of nonviolent protest against policies in order to force a change or secure concessions. Among its most articulate advocates have been Gandhi, who maintained that action needs to be accompanied by love and a willingness to search for the truth, and Martin Luther King, Jr., who called for "tough-mindedness and tenderheartedness."

Most of the modern management theories focus more on experimenting and researching in order to find other ways to answer these questions of resistance while traditional Indian philosophy tends to use past experiences and wise teachings and are more conventional in finding ways in answering these questions.

Transformational change is perceived from outside the mind of the individual. It has to been seen and is externally focused for results. Most Indian philosophies however do not advocate a materialistic approach. They are very internally focused, within the realm of the individuals and believe that improving basic thinking of man will automatically enhance the quality of his actions and their results. The immense inner potential of human being needs to be harnessed. This will translate into transformational change in the organization or society.

Modern philosophers and philosophers in India do acknowledge that human beings resist change, it is their basic nature. The difference only evolves when they look at methods to manage this resistance to change.

RESISTANCE TO CHANGE MODELS

Managing change can be a reactive or a proactive process, and there are a number of different models of organizational change. Each model emphasizes different approaches to understanding and managing change. In many of these models, the role of the change manager is emphasized. The change manager may be a part of a transitional management team or may be a change agent. This person facilitates the changes to the organization and is often a critical element in the success or failure of the change.

In the late 1940s social psychologist Kurt Lewin developed a three-step model for implementing change based on the concept of force field analysis. Force field analysis addresses the driving and resisting forces in a change situation. Driving forces must outweigh resisting forces in a situation for a change to occur. Thus, managers must be willing to advocate change strongly in order to overcome resistance from employees. Lewin proposed a 3 step process of , unfreezing old activities, introduction of new concepts and then freezing of new activities. R.J. Bullock and D. Batten derived their ideas from project management and they recommend using exploration, planning, action, and integration for planned change. John P. Kotter identified eight steps every organization must follow in order to reap long-term benefits from organizational change. Establish a sense of urgency, form a powerful guiding coalition, create a vision and strategy, communicate the vision, empower others to act on the vision, generate short-term wins, consolidate improvements and produce still more change, and institutionalize the new approach. Beckhard and Harris proposed a change formula is a mathematical representation of the change process, $(A \times B \times D) > X$. The basic notion is that, for change to occur, the costs of change (X) must be outweighed by dissatisfaction with the status quo (X), the desirability of the proposed change (X), and the practicality of the change (X)

Leading an organization through change involves constructively balancing human needs with those of the organization (Spiker and Lesser, 1995; Ackerman, 1986). Because organizations consist ultimately of people, organizational change essentially involves personal change (Band, 1995). Change requires the participation of people who must first change themselves for organizational change to succeed.

INDIAN ETHOS IN MANAGEMENT

Vedic literature contains knowledge about all fields of human endeavor, from physics and psychology to medicine, art and aeronautics.

A study of how this knowledge is transferred and communicated just by word of mouth is very interesting. Core to this system of knowledge was the "gurukul" system. In this type of school, sishyas (students) live in the proximity of their guru (Teacher). Upanishad is a combination of three words: upa, ni, and sad. Upa means near; ni means below and determination, and sad means, to sit down. Thus the simple meaning of Upanishad is "near below sitting". The indicative meaning is that a student, having developed sufficiently good qualities of heart and mind, with burning desire for knowledge, approaches a teacher; sits at his feet, tunes his mind to the teachings given by the master, and tries his best to absorb and practice the teachings.

The Siksha valli of Taittirya Upanishad describes the basics for a student, the qualities required and the mindset towards gaining knowledge. Fundamental to this ancient Indian approach, is that knowledge is not just handed over to the student. He needs to develop a mind and mediate. The Guru will guide him in the process of gaining knowledge. A very important aspect that is core quality is sharing of knowledge. "Svadhyayapravachanabhyam na pramaditavyam" The process of acquisition of knowledge and sharing the knowledge acquired with others is the best form of austerity that one can practice in this world. Every transaction here is to be seen as an opportunity to gain and share experience. Then the transactions enhance the openness of a person. This is very unlike the closed feeling that develops when one takes advantage of others. One should not default from the attitude of 'study and teach' at any time.

Indian Philosophy is internally focused and human centered. The foundation for this philosophy is succinctly summarized in Bhagavad Gita which is a part of the epic Mahabharata. The fundamental essence is to be in harmony with nature and in this state there is no resistance in human beings. A successful harmonious and happy life revolves around divinity of life through self development for personal growth.. Core to this concept is again for knowledge without attachment of any desires or materialistic benefit.

Venkat Krishnan (2001) studied the characteristics of transformational leadership and why Indian philosophical approaches are needed in management. Mulla and Krishnan (2006a) identified the dimensions of Karma-Yoga using a contemporary version of the Gita (Gandhi, 2001).

They also further studied its relationship with empathy (2008). Svadharma is another concept that is discussed in Gita. It connotes righteous living, thinking and action towards a constructive interaction with humanity. It essentially states that it is better to do your own duty, however imperfectly, than to assume the duties of another person, however successfully.

According to the Vedas, all material elements are infused with the modes of nature, or gunas namely, sattva, rajas and tamas. Dasgupta (1961) describes the gunas as "the universal characteristics of all kinds of mental tendencies". David Wolf (1999) made a psychometric analysis of the three Gunas and developed the vedic personality inventory (VPI) an instrument that assesses the validity of the three guna constructs.

Choi Hoi Hee (2006) applied perspectives from Bhagavad Gita towards development of a holistic approach to business management.

Most of the studies in Indian ethos has centered around human behavior, psychology, leadership and empathy. Resistance to change at the human behavior level has been extensively studied and concepts from these philosophies being applied to self-management and perfection. Sharing of knowledge for the good of the society at large is prescribed for practice and emphasized in almost all vedic literature.

HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

The above literature survey helped us to design a study to clarify and validate the research problem. An earlier study done by us in the Indian automotive industry, reported that people issues in implementation of product lifecycle management software was a major concern. This study is therefore designed to understand in more detail about the people issues and their resistance to change. We further investigate the cultural background of the people and its impact on the level of resistance and type of resistance. The types of resistance were studied in two dimensions of action and expressiveness. Actions were classified into active and passive and expressiveness was classified as overt and covert.

Hypothesis 1

Cultural background has no impact on level of resistance. Irrespective of the cultural background it is basic human nature to resist any change. **Hypothesis 2**

Cultural background has no impact on type of resistance. People with Indian or other western cultural background will be equally expressive in their resistance to change.

DESIGN AND METHOD

The research used hypothesis testing to examine the strength of the relationship between cultural background and resistance. A structured questionnaire was designed and administered for data collection. A Purposive and judgmental sampling selected the target candidates. We implemented this approach because the data being sought could only be sourced from individuals exposed to the resistance phase of organizational change brought about by their software implementation. Questionnaires were hosted on a website and the link distributed to participants by email, for completion at their own convenience. The two primary reasons for choosing a self-administrated questionnaire were efficiency in data collection for measuring specific variables of interest, and anonymity for respondents who were disclosing personal information about themselves and their reactions to change.

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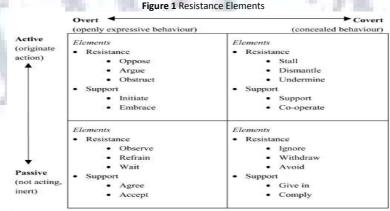
Eight six candidates, in the age group of 20 to 60 and with diverse cultural backgrounds were contacted for the survey. The candidates were primarily selected with a background of involvement with product lifecycle management software implementation in their organization. The candidates were also selected with various industry background to eliminate any sampling bias. Fifty eight candidates responded, with 70 % of Indian cultural background, 5 % from other eastern cultures and 25 % with Western cultural background.

MEASURES

A questionnaire was designed to collect the level and type of resistance to change. The parameters for measuring resistance to change were on two dimensions. A 20-item seven-point interval scale was developed by the Bovey and Hede (2001) to measure an individual's behavioral intention towards organizational change. We used the same approach and used a 7 point scale to measure both support and resistance behavior. Questions for survey were constructed from key words derived in the quadrant of active-passive and overt-covert dimensions. We selected this approach to designing this questionnaire due to three reasons. First, short and precise statements could be formulated from the above dimensions. Second, responses were recorded on an interval scale which provides greater options for statistical analysis as opposed to a nominal scale. Finally this approach had been previously validated and successfully used by the previous researcher.

The 20 elements in the research dimension are shown in figure 1.

These questions were validated internally and by experts before administration to ensure their reliability.



(Source: Wayne, H.Bovey, Andrew, Hede (2001)

Questions were also formulated to collect their cultural background. Basic information collected and questions designed to understand any resistance that was encountered in their organization during a software implementation.

LIMITATIONS OF THE METHODOLOGY

A number of limitations are acknowledged with this research.

First, because the study adopts purposive sampling, the findings from this study need a validation on a larger scale with a probabilistic sample before it can be generalized. Second, the data collection method used was very structured. This approach did not allow the opportunity to identify measure and test other significant variables that may be associated with resistance to change. Third, self-reporting on a questionnaire is subjective rather than objective. Finally, respondents may have underestimated their level of resistance, producing respondent bias. Despite these limitations, which are common in most social research, the design and methodology was considered adequate.

RESHITS

The data was analyzed for reliability and measures of association along with an analysis of variance (ANOVA) for resistance between Indian and Western cultures.

RESULTS SUMMARY

The survey results were analyzed by cultural background. The survey indicated that 67 % of the respondents reported that there was resistance to the software implementation in their organization. Irrespective of the cultural background, 28% of the respondents indicated "departments and individuals lacked motivation to change" as the main reason for resistance. 21 % of them indicated "internal culture of organization" as a reason for resistance.

HYPOTHESIS 1 RESULTS

The hypothesis of cultural background having no impact on level of resistance was accepted. The cronbach alpha was reported as 0.71, which indicated good reliability.

The statistical analysis for the results and the ANOVA results are presented below in figure (2).

Figure 2 Hypothesis-1 Summaries

SUMMARY				
Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
Eastern	21	1649	78.52381	71.8619
Western	10	848	84.8	47.73333

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	Fcrit
Between Groups	266.8393241	1	266.8393	4.145159	0.050979	4.182965
Within Groups	1866.838095	29	64.37373			
Total	2133.677419	30				
Accept H0	N=58					

(Source: Survey results)

We therefore conclude that irrespective of the cultural background resistance to change from the software implementations were same. It is human to resist change.

HYPOTHESIS 2 RESULTS

The hypothesis was that cultural background has no impact on type of resistance. People with Indian or other western cultural background will be equally expressive in their resistance to change.

The cronbach alpha was reported as 0.71, which indicated good reliability. The statistical analysis for the results and the ANOVA results are presented below in figure (3) .

Figure 3 Hypothesis-2 Summaries

Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance		
Eastern	21	740	35.2381	22.59048		
Western	11	431	39.18182	31.56364		
H0: Eastern or Western both e	equally use Expressive met	noas in re	sistance.			
ANOVA						
ANOVA Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Source of Variation	SS 112.2728626	df 1	MS 112.2729	F 4.388825	P-value 0.044721	
ANOVA Source of Variation Between Groups Within Groups		<i>df</i> 1 30		•		F crit 4.170886

(Source: Survey results)

This hypothesis was rejected and we conclude that people in the east do not favor expressive methods in their resistance. They are more likely to use non-expressive methods to indicate their resistance.

DISCUSSION

The objective of the study is to investigate the need for applying culture specific philosophies in management to address the resistance emanating from the change introduced by a knowledge management software implementations in an organization.

The first hypothesis showed that irrespective of culture, people resist change. This is universally known and revalidated from the statistical analysis.

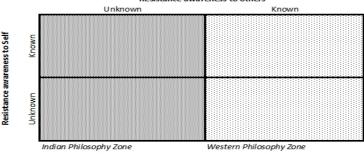
The second hypothesis of expressiveness of resistance being the same irrespective of culture is rejected. This indicates that in eastern cultures, specifically in India, people may not freely express their resistance. This factor may arise due to their culture and environment in which they have grown. Further study in applying culture specific philosophies in India should focus on this non expressive nature of resistance.

In order to summarize the literature survey and the results we conceived a resistance window, which has dimensions of awareness of resistance in self and awareness of an individual's resistance to others. This is depicted as shown in figure (4).

This resistance window indicates that most modern management theories, based on western philosophy, have strengths in addressing resistance aspects that are visible and expressed to others. Indian philosophy on the other hand has strengths in addressing the resistance aspects that are internal to the individual and unknown to others. They may also address aspects that are unknown to both.

Figure 4 Resistance window

Resistance awareness to others



Resistance Window with Philosophy Strengths

(Source: Compiled by author)

This suggests that there is a case to use both the philosophies to arrive at a more holistic approach to address the areas of people resistance emanating from change introduced by software implementations.

Both the philosophies have their areas of strength and need to be considered while formulating a comprehensive implementation framework.

AREAS OF FUTURE RESEARCH

This investigation suggests that there is a scope to apply Indian philosophies towards management. Cultural aspects of Indians, especially the non-expressive nature of resistance can be addressed by culture specific philosophies.

Future research can therefore be considered in understanding some core Indian concepts like svadharma, karma yoga, the Gunas and how the same can be applied towards managing this resistance to change and make this individual in the organization share the knowledge as a corporate asset in the tools being implemented in the organisation. Spiritual intelligence is a growing domain today and many Indian philosophies seem to address same. Future studies on applying spiritual intelligence to managing resistance to change in an Indian context may also be considered.

A holistic approach to managing this resistance is essential in the development of a comprehensive implementation methodology.

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