Resistance to Change in Organizations of the Republic of Kazakhstan: 
Country-Specific Reasons and Ways to Overcome it

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Abstract: Employee commitment and managing resistance successfully are critical prerequisites for effective change management. This article examines employee resistance to change in organizations of the Republic of Kazakhstan and relies on Kurt Lewin’s force field analysis model (as a base of the conceptual framework) in order to understand and analyze the essence and country peculiarities of this scarcely researched topic from the change management perspective. According to Kurt Lewin’s force field analysis model, a manager seeking to “push” the process of organizational change must put all effort to reduce the effect of hindering forces while increasing the effect of driving forces and this way work with resistance of employees towards change. This is a qualitative study, a number of interviews have been conducted to define general and country-specific peculiarities of restraining forces that make employees resist changes.

Key words: Resistance to change • Change management • Force field analysis • Organizational changes • The Republic of Kazakhstan

INTRODUCTION

The modern pace of evolution of humanity at a time when changes in almost all spheres of life are accelerated, the need for rapid adaptation and maximum prediction of future changes arises. Processes occur so rapidly that even the absolute innovations are only such for a short period of time. While implementing competitive strategies, companies are constantly forced to monitor the changes taking place on the market and must observe actions of competitors in order not to lag behind in the short term and be ahead of everyone in the long term. Constant changes have become an objective necessity for everyone, even for those who do not want to change.

In this regard, Kazakhstan businesses must use the world experience of change management in their practices and in day to day operations. Domestic companies need to revise their economic, administrative, social and psychological aspects of management and business.

Companies mainly operate as open systems and are subject to external influence, so they need to change and adapt to the market conditions. The requirements to change come from inside the company in the form of needs and expectations of employees and from outside in the form of increased competition, technological innovations, new legislation and the pressure of social factors.

If the company fails to make the necessary changes, then it has to pay a very high price for its negligence in terms of important changes. For example, in the last decade of the 20th century from the list of the top twenty companies in Europe within five years fifteen companies disappeared (became out of market). This was the result that the company did not anticipate and did not wish to notice changes in the external environment. However, there are also other numbers stating that 50 to 70% of all organizational changes initiated in 1980 - 90 failed to achieve its goals. According to estimates of M. Hammer, American expert on restructuring companies, out of 32 billion dollars spent by companies on these processes, 20 billions have been wasted [1]. In other words, not every change leads to a positive result. Nevertheless, there is no alternative for change. Despite the high risk of failure, companies have to constantly look for, implement and manage change.

Employees attitude and their relation to organizational changes play a defining role and importance in the changes taking place in the organization. It is known, that a significant challenge to the implementation of organizational changes or programs...
of change is resistance to change. It is the opposition to any changes and transformations in organizations demonstrated by employees in this or other form. It is noteworthy to say that people resist not only bad or harmful, in their view, changes but also to those that obviously seem positive and not damaging. This way, employees may have many reasons and motives not accept changes and resist them.

Thus, it is logical to consider organizational changes through the model created by Kurt Lewin. Its base is in the position that the understanding of the changes involves the awareness and the concept of stability. In his model, Lewin posed questions like what forces lead to the establishment and maintenance of a balance or what kind of factors in the organization that "push" to changes. This way, Levin called movements towards change as "driving forces" and blocking movements towards achievement of a goal as "hindering forces" [2]. In case of equality of these forces - the organization can retain a stable position.

Thus, implementation of changes at an organization involves either an increase in the value of driving forces, or a decrease in limiting hindering forces or some combination of interactions that lead to the violation of their balance. Figure 1 shows the forces that maintain the balance in the organization, which has recently undergone major changes.

Kurt Lewin believed that a manager seeking to "push" the process of organizational change must put all efforts to reduce the effect of hindering forces while increasing the effect of driving forces and this way work with resistance of employees towards change. He stated that resistance to change was status quo of the organization, therefore working with personnel, explaining them the change procedures and new rules was important.

It is noteworthy to say that Kurt Lewin’s [2] field theory was the starting point in the use of the term resistance to change in the 1950s and 1960s. Since then resistance to change was considered as part of change process in organizations and was examined by organizational development and management scholars. Resistance is defined as a restraining force that oppose any changes in organizations [2].

**Literature Review:** Individuals and organizations are in continuous process of change and therefore questions and issues about the nature of change and different reactions to change emerge within the companies all the time. Moreover, organizations’ change efforts do not bring results because of little time spent by managers and change experts to understand it and as a subsequent consequence, this can be costly to organizations in many senses [3].

In change management literature resistance is definitely studied and is said that it may have various forms, for example it could be in the form of absenteeism, foot-dragging, withdrawal, hidden and open sabotage and whistleblowing [4]. Also, it could be in the form of strikes, working to rule and symbolic sabotage [5]. It is also conventional to consider those who oppose and resist changes as irrational and therefore change resistance must be managed and overcome [6].

Herscovitch and Meyer, [7] Wanberg and Banas, [8] stated that resistance to change and organizational change must be examined at the individual level of analysis and not at the organizational one. They also stated that planned organizational change efforts involved individual commitment demonstrated by each employee at an organization.

Ford et al. [9] state that resistance to change could be a result of inadequate and ineffective management. Moreover, they consider resistance to change as a resource to enhance change initiatives since management can detect problems and challenges in their change programs and align them accordingly.

Yet another perspective is found in Lawrence [10] Lawrence’s discussion about resistance to change is focused on both technical and social aspects of resistance to change. He stated that little attention to social characteristics might be a cause of resistance to
change of employees in the organization. Furthermore, Lawrence went on explaining that attitudes played an important role in how managers think about resistance to change and that expecting resistance from employees often could lead to just that. To cope with that he suggested that managers should begin thinking of resistance to change as a useful sign that something was going wrong.

The emotional reaction of employees to changes as a sign of resistance is discussed more than the behavioral one. Argyris and Schon [11] spoke about resistance in terms of defensive routines and frustration. Kanter [12] speculated about feelings of uncertainty and loss of control in understanding responses to change.

Dent and Goldberg [13] suggested that understanding of the knowledge and attitudes of personnel were the crucial aspects in change efforts lead by managers. Also, Dent and Goldberg [13] stated that managers might think that employee resistance was their reaction to the way the change was implemented or that their expectations were not met.

Kotter [2], a recognized scholar in the area of organizational development pointed out that intentional resistance to change was rare. He stated that lower level personnel were more eager to change efforts but found resistance to change in upper level management.

In most research on resistance to change, the focus is taken from the perspective of those who implement change (managers and change agents). This way Klein [14] and Thomas [15] argue that little is written about the perspectives of those who have less influence on changes and usually less powered simple workers are just recipients of changes imposed by top managers.

Thus, Ashford, Rothbard, Pideritand Dutton [16] state that personnel by resisting give signs and try to get to top management that the problematic issue must be addressed in order to improve the company performance. This kind of research oriented towards employees has become a new stream in understanding resistance to changes from the point of view of people in organizations.

Past empirical research review states that there are three different conceptualizations of resistance to change: some researchers try to understand and explain it from the point of view of a cognitive state, others as an emotional reaction and the rest researchers examine resistance to changes from the behavioral point of view. Bringing together these varying views should enhance our understanding of how personnel react to changes in organizations [17].

Coch and French [18] in their comprehensive study spoke about undesirable behaviors of employees in response to management-imposed changes. They put an experiment to test if employee support and involvement in changes planning could help reduce resistance. This way their study also dwelled on the participative decision making and enabled the understanding of the nature and peculiarities of changes in organizations. Moreover, Coch and French [18] by analyzing the forces that produce frustration and aggression in employees acknowledged a more emotional component of resistance.

Watson [19] states that resistance is, in fact, only reluctance. Armenakis, Harris and Mossholder [20] define resistance as "(un)readiness" which is a cognitive state.

Three emphases in conceptualizations of resistance - as a behavior, an emotion, or a belief (cognitive state) - have their own justification and represent a key element of our experience and understanding of resistance to change. However, any definition doing an accent on one point of view only could divert us from knowing and managing resistance effectively.

In conclusion of this brief literature review, it is important to point out that resistance to change during change project and programs is an inevitable process and phenomena. Even scholars and researchers are not unanimous in their speculations about origins and reasons of resistance of people in organizations. From the researchers’ multidimensional approach to resistance to cognitive conceptualization of it - anyways resistance remains the object of study of many scholars in science once an organization turns its direction to change.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Data Collection: Data for this study were collected using qualitative methods [21]. We collected data from several sources: the first source is unstructured and semi-structured interviews with employees of different companies in Kazakhstan (they were our primary informants), the second source is non-participant observation. The third source is publicly available sources such as the internet, newspapers, articles and textbooks.

Selection of Interviewees and the Interview Process: A "convenience approach" [22] was used during interview conducting and the respondents in the sample were selected by virtue of their "availability". Nonetheless, such criteria as the firm’s existence on the market and in industry, the type of industry were identified. Most of the
interviews were conducted in Almaty, the former capital city of the country and now a cultural and financial center of the republic and in Taldykorgan, the center of Almaty oblast.

We conducted 55 informal interviews in fifteen companies in Kazakhstan during fall 2013. Each interview was conducted in Russian and Kazakh languages and approximately was 30-60 minutes in length, digitally recorded and then transcribed.

Interviewees have been asked to talk freely about their companies, organizational changes taking place, their attitude towards changes, if they see that top management is supportive towards them in times of change implementation etc. While interviewing, we later analyzed employee attitudes to their organizations, to their management and if they understand clearly the vision, aims and objectives of the organization they work for. We were also interested in identifying the organizational climate and morale of employees, their level of satisfaction and relationships with each other and the employers. Some insights regarding employee resistance have been made and this is discussed and analyzed in the next sections of this paper. The profiles of all interviewees are presented in Table 1.

**Data Analysis, Ensuring Trustworthiness:** By identifying pertinent concepts and ideas in the data we grouped them into categories (open coding). During analysis, the concepts continued to appear and then we started developing relationships between categories. In order to avoid problems related to retrospective accounts during the findings phase, we confirmed a finding across multiple respondent answers.

To ensure that our analyses aligned criteria for trustworthiness of Lincoln and Guba [23] we applied the following technique: while one of the author’s responsibility was gathering data and its analysis, the other researchers’ responsibility included formulating follow-up interview questions and providing additional insights for developing findings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Organization interviewed</th>
<th>How many years working in a company</th>
<th>Interviewees job position</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KAZ 1</td>
<td>Management consultancy (international)</td>
<td>About 8 years About 7 years About 1 year About 3 years About 5 years</td>
<td>HR manager Line manager Coordinator IT specialist Accountant</td>
<td>Almaty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAZ 2</td>
<td>Subsidiary of an American company (international)</td>
<td>About 5 years About 9 years About 2 years About 5 years About 1 year</td>
<td>Chief accountant Project manager IT programmer Project coordinator Specialist</td>
<td>Almaty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAZ 3</td>
<td>Education (International Business school)</td>
<td>About 10 years About 7 years About 8 years About 2 years About 5 years</td>
<td>College Dean Faculty staff 1 Faculty staff 2 Faculty staff 3 Faculty staff 4</td>
<td>Almaty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAZ 4</td>
<td>IT consulting company (international)</td>
<td>About 10 years About 12 years About 3 years About 6 years About 11 years</td>
<td>Financial analyst HR Director Director assistant IT specialist Accountant</td>
<td>Almaty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAZ 5</td>
<td>Telecommunications Company (international)</td>
<td>About 9 years About 3 years About 5 years About 8 years About 1 year</td>
<td>HR manager Marketing specialist IT manager IT specialist Engineer</td>
<td>Almaty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAZ 6</td>
<td>Retail company</td>
<td>About 4 years About 1 year About 5 years About 5 years About 2 years</td>
<td>Sales manager 1 Sales manager 2 Sales person 1 Sales person 2 Accountant</td>
<td>Almaty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Profile of interviewees
Table 1: Continue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Organization interviewed</th>
<th>How many years working in a company</th>
<th>Interviewees job position</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KAZ 7</td>
<td>Beauty salon</td>
<td>About 2 years</td>
<td>Hairdresser 1</td>
<td>Taldykorgan</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>About 3 years</td>
<td>Hairdresser 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>About 4 years</td>
<td>Specialist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAZ 8</td>
<td>Advertising agency</td>
<td>About 10 years</td>
<td>Marketing specialist</td>
<td>Almaty</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>About 5 years</td>
<td>Janitor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>About 1 year</td>
<td>Technical specialist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAZ 9</td>
<td>Retail company</td>
<td>About 10 years</td>
<td>Sales person</td>
<td>Taldykorgan</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>About 4 years</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>About 5 years</td>
<td>Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>KAZ 10</td>
<td>Furniture production and selling</td>
<td>About 7 years</td>
<td>Carpenter</td>
<td>Almaty</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>About 2 years</td>
<td>Technician</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>KAZ 11</td>
<td>Cleaning services</td>
<td>About 2 years</td>
<td>Worker</td>
<td>Almaty</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>About 2 years</td>
<td>Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>KAZ 12</td>
<td>Bakery</td>
<td>About 11 years</td>
<td>Technology manager</td>
<td>Taldykorgan</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>About 9 years</td>
<td>Baker</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>About 5 years</td>
<td>Line manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>KAZ 13</td>
<td>Body shop</td>
<td>About 6 years</td>
<td>Engineer 1</td>
<td>Taldykorgan</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>About 6 years</td>
<td>Engineer 2</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>About 2 years</td>
<td>Technician</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>About 5 year</td>
<td>Mechanic</td>
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<tr>
<td>KAZ 14</td>
<td>Hairdressers’</td>
<td>About 3 years</td>
<td>Hairdresser 1</td>
<td>Taldykorgan</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>About 3 years</td>
<td>Hairdresser 2</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>About 5 years</td>
<td>Owner</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAZ 15</td>
<td>Event management company</td>
<td>About 9 years</td>
<td>Event-manager</td>
<td>Almaty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>About 6 years</td>
<td>Accountant</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The researchers made a summary of the main factors identified during the interviews and the research team then compared and discussed findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Below is a brief description of respondents’ answers to the interview questions. It has been decided to present this information in order to see the picture of employee attitude towards changes and find factors and reasons of employee resistance.

What Kind of Changes Are Planned in Your Organization?: The organization status and legal forms of organizations were subjects of change according to answers of 10% of respondents. Another 50% of respondents said that there were changes planned with the company’s positioning on the market (change in marketing strategies) while 30% of respondents pointed out that a significant change in their job duties and responsibilities were expected. The rest respondents did not have a clue what kind of changes were planned in their respective organizations.

Do You Support Changes Taking Place in the Company?: To this obvious question there were ambiguous answers of respondents. In general, all employees understand the importance of changes, however they disagree with the way they are introduced in their firms. They refer to ineffective management efforts as a hindrance for them to support changes. Majority of respondents think of leaving the job for another employment opportunity. Overall, 61% of respondents support changes and on the contrary, 39% do not support changes in their organizations.

Are You Satisfied with the Level of Your Awareness about the Changes Taking Place in Your Company?: Only 7% of respondents are satisfied with their level of awareness about the changes going on in their companies. Majority of them work for International companies with international management staff and therefore they think that top management is doing well in adequate informing personnel about changes taking place within departments in particular and the company in general. Also, it has been identified that, 33% of respondents are partially satisfied with their awareness.
and they represent small and medium sized firms in which as they state it is easier to be informed about the changes, moreover they are themselves both the initiators and implementers of change.

In addition to that, 35% respondents state that they are not satisfied with their level of awareness although they always show interest in the company developments. They also say that although communication channels are established correctly, they feel negligence from the top management in this aspect. They feel that information is not specifically distributed for them because top managers do not consider doing so. The rest respondents are not interested about their level of awareness about the changes and some have not stated reasons why, while others consider quitting jobs.

**Do You Think That Changes Taking Place in Your Organization Are Purposeful and Necessary?:** Again, a small number of people working for international companies think that changes are necessary and important for their respective companies. Majority who are reluctant about the purposefulness and importance of changes in the company represent those who are from local Kazakhstan companies. They point out that a more theoretical approach should be used in implementing changes, they also state the process of change management is chaotic and not systematized.

**Who Should Take Part in Planning and Implementing Changes in the Organization?:** Majority of respondents state that everyone must participate in organizational changes. However, this is not always the case with some of them. 42% of respondents emphasize that changes are forced from the top down and they are not always compatible with the time, material resources (little space in the room, not enough computers and necessary computer programs etc) and job responsibilities of workers. As a result, employees are overloaded with work, they perform a lot of cross-functional duties that are not considered in the salaries.

**Are There Any Workers in Your Company Who Disagree with the Ongoing Changes in Your Company?:** The respondents’ answers split into three major categories: 35% of respondents totally disagree with ongoing changes. Reasons: a huge work overload as a result of job optimization and lay-offs, stress, procrastination, a lot of documentation, numerous meetings, job-related conflicts (mostly resolved professionally in the end), disagreement with change aims and simple misunderstanding. They state that an adequate level of preparation for changes have not been conducted. This includes training as they state, communication and psychological preparation for changes. Another one third of respondents state that they support changes which are aligned with the corporate goals. They also point out that achievement of change goals have financial incentives for them and therefore their motivation level is high to implement them. The rest one third of respondents state that they do not notice any disagreed people around. In general, they do not pay attention to any changes and people attitude towards them.

**How Do You Cope with Changes?:** Some respondents’ (39%) answers state that they do not do anything, they just accept changes as they are and strictly follow rules and procedures of the companies. Some respondents (48%) say that they frequently discuss alterations in the work processes with their colleagues but never discuss them with their direct managers. The rest respondents state that when they expressed their opinion about the discrepancies in the work procedures due to the imposed changes, their efforts were neglected and they received no viable and feasible answer to all their enquiries. This way they preferred not to do anything.

**Do You Observe Resistance to Changes?:** Majority of respondents observe hidden resistance which is in the form of hall (out of office) discussions and talks about their disagreement and frustration about changes imposed by the top management. For instance, one respondent stated that a year ago it was decided to implement the KPI system (key performance indicators), later when they were asked to submit their KPI reports very few people were able to do so. The worker pointed out that KPI training was not organized properly and that the process of training was chaotic. Change experts force us follow instructions and rules we do not want to follow.

Those employees (25%) in the companies of which change management is properly organized observe no signs of resistance to change.

Others say (29%) that since changes have taken place - they feel apathy and frustration and again because of the workload, little time for rest and they see no seeming difference in their salaries. Some state that they are indifferent to changes and their current work state because they plan to change jobs and the company they work in.
What Do These Changes Mean for You Personally?:
For those who resist to changes (29% of respondents), changes bring fear of uncertainty, fear that their skills, knowledge and abilities will not match needed skills and knowledge for the company. They also notice that it is becoming more and more difficult to achieve a work life balance due to changes that are not ready for. Top management has no reaction to that.

Supporters of changes (31% of respondents) happen to be those who hold a managerial position in the company. They see perspectives in the job and even a career advancement as a result of the changes conducted to increase the competitiveness of their organizations. There are also some respondents (40% of respondents) working in large international companies who are quite positive about current results of change interventions and are looking forward for even more advantages of the company change efforts.

Why Do You Work for this Company?: The responses of respondents state that they stay with their companies because they like their jobs and the working environment there. They also add that financially the work satisfied their requirements and that they observe a professional growth within the organizations they work for.

Other respondents point out that only financial incentive hold them from dropping their work and in case another better paid job with better working conditions and organizational climate appears in the future - they will quit the current job.

Content analysis of interviews has revealed several topics that highlight and describe the topic of employee resistance to changes. The following themes of types of employee resistance have emerged [24]:

- Employee resistance forms - passive and active;
- Employee resistance emergence levels - personal (individual), logical, psychological, social, organizational (group and collective);
- Employee resistance sources - technical, political and cultural.

As for the country peculiarities related to employee resistance reasons (could be considered as restraining forces), the following typical and characteristic to Kazakhstan organizations issues have been identified:

- Low trust to top management on behalf of employees. The respondents’ answers indicate that they do not believe in the best intentions of the managers. The trust has been broken for several reasons: the managers are not qualified to lead changes, the change has been communicated wrongly, in the wrong place, time and manner and it was imposed from the top down without their consent. After some time, the promises of change advantages have not been kept. However, it is noteworthy to say that those employees working for international and well-established companies on the contrary demonstrate deep respect and trust to management.
- Non-recognition of problems and inconsistencies in understanding of their causes. This issue has appeared multiple times during our interviews with employees. Employees say that management does not hear them and that sometimes more explanation is needed. The split in understanding is another aspect to consider: the way employees see how to deal with their projects and day-to-day operations in many cases differ with the way how managers want to perform them.
- Fear of work overload. This reasons is the the most outspoken issue that causes a lot of resistance to changes among employees. Many respondents have pointed out this as a primary reason to reject changes. Some especially in times of global financial crisis resisted a lot because mass lay-offs and optimization processes led companies shrink their resources and those who survived took the burden of huge work afterwards.
- Lack of feedback from management. This issue emerged only in local companies, majority of employees stated that they were unaware of change results and when they asked for some clarification - they did not receive any feasible answer.
- Low trust to initiators of changes. This problem has a relation to the first reason and is associated with low trust to management. However, in companies where external consultant or expert was invited, the initiative suggested by him or her was met cold enough from behalf of employees. Those who resisted explained that the consultant was an outsider and he/she did not know the “rules of the game” and even the best intention and best change intervention may fail because of this lack of knowledge about organizational culture and overall performance of the organization on the market.

Summing up several approaches in determining reasons of resistance to change, the next is a general list of reasons of employee resistance found in literature.
Reason 1: Predicted negative result. Employees think that changes will have an adverse or negative impact on them. Manfred F. R. Kets de Vries explains that changes let different types of fear emerge, for instance employees are afraid of uncertainty, they fear to lose their power and authority in the course of change [25].

Reason 2: Fear that there will be more work as a result of change. Employees think that the volume of work will increase if changes are implemented and the possibility to earn money will decrease. Strebel [26] states that this fear is based on the assumption that there will be changes in the organizational and personal agreements that include formal, psychological and social aspects.

The formal aspect incorporates the main objective of an employee at work and all his/her requirements for work stipulated in a company documents, job responsibilities, contracts etc. If change touches upon these already established elements of work - this will cause resistance.

Psychological aspect includes personal agreements and is related to employment conditions and how they are perceived by a worker. This as pect is more implicit than explicit.

Social aspect involves the notion of employees’ understanding and perception on how they see that managers not only speak but also prove by actions about the corporate values and the role each worker plays in an organization.

This way the more negative influence on personal agreements observe and experience workers, the stronger resistance to change.

Reason 3: The necessity to give up old habits. Changes imply quitting old habits, it is usually painful and frustrating to employees, therefore they resist.

Reason 4: Lack of information (not enough information). Effective change management practices include informing people on a timely manner using adequate communication channels. If this is not the case, shortage of information will cause uncertainty and resistance to change.

Reason 5: Inability of an organization to foster changes as a whole system. For instance, change implies changes in organizational structures, technologies, people skills, key managers, corporate values and strategic aims. If these are not aligned altogether, the efforts of change agents and some people of organizations will not yield results.

Reason 6: Employee mutiny. Employees resist because they think this is something imposed on them. Moreover, if they see that management is not changing but the top down request to change is required, then there is no doubt that they (employees) will resist because they see a discrepancy between what is planned and what is being done.

Since 1991 Kazakhstan became an independent republic. Many serious political and economic changes have taken place in our country since then. Despite the complexity of domestic and external international pressures, such as the privatization, presence in the Customs Union, preparation to enter the World Trade Organization and other economic transformations that contributed to the country's transition to a market economy, the state is becoming global and open to other markets now. Thus, the issue of competitiveness of Kazakhstan organizations arises and it has become evident that change may become a prerequisite for better company performance. However, all change efforts may fail if there is a fierce employee resistance to them. Experts offer the following advice and recommendations for overcoming resistance to change in organizations which can be applicable in Kazakhstan companies as well:

First Recommendation: Determine the need to change. The experience of global companies that have successfully implemented change programs proves that it is necessary to awaken the need for change in each employee. A key role in overcoming resistance plays an executive (top manager) who instills the feelings of anxiety in employees and proves by his or her own example that change is needed. John Kotter states that a major change occurs when managers convince more than 75% of ordinary workers [27].

Second recommendation: Create a clear, attractive vision of the future, show people how to improve their lives.

It is difficult to overestimate the role and importance of vision in organizational changes. Kotter predicts that without "proper vision of efforts to transform is necessary. Otherwise the actions will fall into a series of confusing, incompatible with each other, devouring time projects developing in the wrong direction or not developing" [27]. Thus, if the company's management does not understand the purpose for which they want to lead the organization through the changes, then it is needed to reconsider the whole venture of the change implementation.
Third Recommendation: Achieve real results in the work and success in the early stages of the change process. Successful change programs begin with obvious, tangible, practical results and the sooner they come, the better. Uncertainty or inaccuracy in the statement of change objectives create problems at an early stage of transformation in companies. This way, as soon as the quantitative and qualitative results have been achieved (for example, there is evidence that there was a sense to sacrifice many things, management encourages those who have attained results and the number of neutrals sided with those who have positive attitude to changes), it is necessary to fix results through information, motivation and reward.

Fourth Recommendation: Inform all involved in the programs of change. Most experts believe that poorly written or inadequate posts and messages about change are one of the main reasons for the failure of change attempts. The role of communication in the process of change is recognized not only by scientists and researchers but also by managers and workers. Kotter offers seven principles of successful transmission of vision and communication [27]:

- The message should be simple.
- If needed use metaphors, analogies and examples.
- Use more diverse meetings and presentations.
- Repeat, repeat, repeat.
- Lead by example (be a role model).
- Openly talk about the apparent inconsistencies.
- Listen to others and force yourself to listen.

Fifth Recommendation: Give people the opportunity to express their opinion. This is probably the most important and most obvious of all advice on the implementation of changes. Change experts agree that people who are involved in decision-making and discuss what and how the change happens, will not only be more likely to support the transformation, but also will be willingly to take an active part in implementation of changes in an organization [28].

CONCLUSION

 Organizations must change in order to stay competitive in an outer market. This article examines employee resistance to changes in organizations of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Kurt Lewin’s force field analysis model has been applied as a conceptual framework with the aim to understand the essence and features of employee resistance to changes. Kurt Lewin’s force field analysis model suggests that managers must do everything possible to reduce the effect of restraining forces and in this sense employee resistance is a restraining force.

A brief literature review pertinent to resistance to change research is presented in this study. Scholars examine resistance from different lenses: from behavioral, cognitive and emotional aspects of conceptualization. There are numerous views on change resistance but they are only unanimous in trying to understand and study this important element of change process in organizations.

The authors conducted 55 interviews in 15 Kazakhstan companies to reveal country-specific factors and reasons of employee resistance to changes. Research findings suggest that country related reasons of resistance are - low trust to top management on behalf of employees, non-recognition of problems and inconsistencies in understanding of their causes, fear of work overload, lack of feedback from management, low trust to initiators of changes. This is not a complete list of all reasons and factors of employee resistance to changes and further study is needed to identify the underlying causes of such attitude of workers to changes. For instance, this study did not explicitly examine past experiences of workers, especially those who had the working experience in the past during the Soviet Union period [29]. The planned economy implied “hard” management in reaching government results (plans) and therefore employee resistance was suppressed.

Kazakhstan managers may make useful inferences from this study and general recommendations: for instance, the country-specific features of employee resistance to change revealed the need to revise management methods in Kazakhstan organizations. Such issues as building trust with employees, providing effective feedback to subordinates and more importantly possessing skills and knowledge on how to lead organizational changes are very critical to Kazakhstan managers.

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