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Change management steps among SMEs

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THE AIM OF THE PAPER

The primary objective of the analysis was to create a detailed, multi-step model through the comparison of change management models found in the literature, encompassing all aspects of the change process during organizational transformation. One of the sub-goals was to test the developed model among SMEs through primary research, which also explored whether respondents considered increasing the frequency of any particular step to be important compared to current practices.

METHODOLOGY

To fulfill these goals, I used a t-test in addition to literature analysis and descriptive statistics. I worked with a sample size of 100 from the leaders of organizations based in Hungary. The sample includes organizations from manufacturing, services, and trade sectors in almost equal proportions.

MOST IMPORTANT RESULTS

The paper creates the broadest model containing the most steps by identifying, comparing and analyzing the steps included in change management models. It has been proven that the Yukl model (which is the broadest model with the largest number of steps available) should be supplemented with a starting and a closing step.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the reviewed literature, the subject of my investigation, i.e., the comparison of the level of steps currently used and considered desirable, has not yet been tested in the literature. This seems to be a promising area of research, as such a study could offer valuable insights into whether leaders are aware of the necessary steps or which actions need greater emphasis to achieve success. These insights could prove particularly beneficial for SME leaders in ensuring effective change management. Raising awareness among SME leaders about the importance of planned change is strongly recommended.

Keywords: change management, leadership, SME

INTRODUCTION

Based on Ford & Ford (1995) opinion, we can talk about a planned organizational change when an organization consciously strives to create conditions different from the current ones, and implements them through a series of measures. Farkas (2013) calls this series of activities aimed at achieving goals change management. There are several solutions for measuring change management, in most cases we find guidelines and necessary change management steps in the literature, where the subject of the investigation is either whether the manager applies these steps at all during a change process, or how often, and how important you think it is to use them. Korzynski *et al.* (2023) writes about that, the Generative AI can play an important role in the decision-making process of managers, HRM and knowledge management in the future. Managers must also be able to adapt to these changes.

The purpose of the literature analysis presented in the next chapter is to create a detailed, multi-step model that covers all the details of the change process by comparing the available change management models. After revealing the steps necessary for successful change, I test the created model in the framework of primary research. In order to find the steps considered most important, I examine which steps the respondents consider important to increase their frequency compared to the currently used one.

Research questions:

Q1: What step-based change management model should be developed to ensure that the steps comprehensively address all aspects of the change process? (Luecke (2003) proposed a 7-step model, Kotter (1995) an 8-step model, Kanter *et al.* (1992) a 10-step model, and Yukl (2010) a 14-step model.)

Q2: Which steps do SME leaders in the sample wish to emphasize more frequently?

LITERATURE REVIEW

So the question is what steps a change management model should include, several authors investigate this, I undertake to create the broadest model containing the most steps. Only change is constant, adapting to changing environmental conditions is a very important factor in the life of an organization (Dajnoki & Héder 2017). Among environmental changes, the pandemic has had a significant impact on SME attitudes. Highlighting a typical change, Totth *et al.* (2022) point out that there has been a definite positive shift in the approach to online communication among domestic SMEs, which the pandemic accelerated and amplified. The vast majority of SMEs in their survey plan further online developments in the near future. In addition to influencing SME attitudes, the pandemic has also affected the public's approach to shopping. According to Törőcsik *et al.* (2014), among the various crises experienced in recent years (such as the virus and climate situations, the Russian-Ukrainian war, and inflation), the public perceived inflation as the greatest threat. SME leaders must also consider this when making decisions.

Yukl (2010) and Bouckenooghe *et al.* (2009) use the work of many authors to create their own models. Yukl (2010) formulates 14 guidelines using the works of many authors (Beer 1988, Conner 1995, Jick 1993, Kotter 1996, Nadler *et al.* 1995, Pettigrew & Whipp 1991, Tichy & Devanna 1986). Bouckenooghe *et al.* (2009) similar to Yukl (2010), using the works of many authors (Korsgaard *et al.* 2002, Lines *et al.* 2004, Schoorman *et al.* 2007, Allen *et al.* 1979, Koys & Decotiis 1991, Lines *et al.* 2005, Eisenberger *et al.* 1986, Miller *et al.* 1994, Oreg 2006, Piderit 2000, Miller-Monge 1986, Eisenberger *et al.* 2002, Carter *et al.* 2004, Covin & Kilmann 1990) to develop his model. Bouckenooghe *et al.* (2009) in addition to the creation of a model, a new tool, a questionnaire, was created under the name 'Organizational Change Questionnaire - Climate of Change, Processes, and Readiness' (hereinafter: OCQ-C,P,R).

Researchers are constantly comparing change management models. The research of Ujhelyi & Filep (2019) compares the 14 guidelines of Yukl (2010) with the 8-step change model of Kotter (1995). By (2005) makes a similar comparison at the level of three models, one of which is also a Kotter (1995) 8 steps, the other Kanter *et al.* (1992) 10-step, and the third Luecke's (2003) 7-step model. However, we still do not know which model would be the most useful for SMEs. I compile Table 1 using the models in the works of the above-mentioned authors. It can be seen in Table 1 that Yukl's point 14 includes the steps of other authors' models to a large extent, nonetheless Yukl's guidelines need to be supplemented with an initial step 1 and a final step 16, which are 'Analysis of the organization and the need for change, problems and their possible solutions identification' from Kanter *et al.* (1992) and Luecke (2003) furthermore the 'Rooting of new solutions' step from Kotter (1995). The importance of the former step is also emphasized by Veresné (2013), who names the effective implementation of the analysis as one of the critical elements for the successful completion of organizational transformation and capacity-building tasks. The omission of this initial step can happen in the case of several leaders because the political behavior of the actors in practical life is extremely high, and Kieser (1995), even the definition of the problem is determined by political maneuvers, since the specific formulation of the problem limits the room for maneuver. March (2000), because those who define the goals do not make sufficient use of the political playing field. The closing, step 16 as described in Kotter's (1995) model, that is, it is necessary to preserve the effects of the change. Without this, employees may tend to return to the original state, which may render the efforts of the previous 15 steps ineffective.

In the research tool, I incorporated previously validated questions. The models of Kotter, Kanter, and Luecke, as well as the OCQ-C, P, R model, have already been tested in the literature. Yukl's model has also been tested, and the previously mentioned models encompass Yukl's steps. The OCQ-C, P, R model has so far been applied primarily in large corporate environments; however, this research highlights that there is not a single element in its table that does not also appear in the other models.

In the OCQ-C, P, R questionnaire, managers must state on a Likert-type evaluation scale how important they consider it to be to apply the various steps. This measuring tool has already been used in several empirical studies, but important steps may be omitted compared to the Yukl model supplemented to 16. In addition, there are several questions per point that assume that it is an examination of a highly hierarchical organization of hundreds of people, so in my opinion it is of limited use in the case of SMEs. To examine change management habits, examining the 16 steps in Table 1 on a Likert-type rating scale can be a sufficiently detailed, ideal solution. A step-by-step explanation of the model is provided in the next paragraph.

Table 1. Comparison of change management models.

Change steps	Yukl	Kotter	Kanter	Luecke	OCQ-C,P,R
1. Analysis of the organization and its necessary changes, identification of problems and their possible solutions *	-	-	X	X	-
2. Create a sense of urgency about the need for change	X	X	X	X	-
3. Communicate a clear vision of the benefits to be gained	X	X	X	X	X
4. Identify likely supporters, opponents, and reasons for resistance	X	-	-	-	-
5. Build a broad coalition to support the change	X	X	X	X	X
6. Use task forces to guide the implementation of changes	X	X	-	-	X
7. Fill key positions with competent change agents	X	-	X	-	X
8. Empower competent people to help plan and implement change	X	X	X	-	-
9. Make dramatic, symbolic changes that affect the work	X	-	X	-	-
10. Prepare people for change by explaining how it will affect them	X	-	-	-	X
11. Help people deal with the stress and difficulties of major change	X	-	-	-	X
12. Provide opportunities for early successes to build confidence	X	X	-	-	-
13. Monitor the progress of change and make any necessary adjustments	X	X	X	X	-
14. Keep people informed about the progress of change	X	-	X	-	X
15. Demonstrate continued optimism and commitment to the change	X	-	-	X	X
16. Rooting of new solutions **	-	X	-	-	-

** Point 1 is an addition to the Yukl model based on Kanter and Luecke. ** Point 16 is an addition to the Yukl model based on Kotter. Source: Own editing, based on Yukl (2010), Kotter (1995), Kanter (1992), Luecke (2003) és Bouckenooghe et al. (2009)*

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1. Analysis of the organization and its necessary changes, identification of problems and their possible solutions.

According to Luecke (2003), joint exploration of organizational problems and their possible solutions mobilizes energy and increases commitment. Kanter *et al.* (1992) also considers the analysis of the organization and its need for change to be an essential initial step.

2. Create a sense of urgency regarding the need for change.

Farkas (2013) draws attention to the key words cooperation, motivation and commitment. This point means raising a healthy sense of danger, which begins with an examination of the market situation. It is important to make it clear to everyone that changes are needed and that the current situation is more dangerous than the unknown. If the employees do not feel the weight of this, then other goals to be achieved may come into focus for them. In addition to discussions, meetings and briefings, dialogue and exciting debates are also needed.

3. Communicate a clear vision of the benefits associated with the change.

Farkas (2013) writes that developing a vision and strategy is not enough, they must also be conveyed to followers, which can never be enough, and every channel must be used to communicate it. An overly complicated vision or its uncertain communication can be dangerous. Developing a meaningful vision and honest, continuous communication is necessary to overcome initial resistance. The team leading the change can set an example to other employees with new behavioral patterns that correspond to the vision. Nowadays, the anticipatory and visionary competencies of leaders can be of particular importance, Baczynska & Korzynski (2017) emphasizes that these can really help leaders understand the dynamics of their environment and foresee the interactions between the forces that shape the environment.

4. Identify likely supporters, opponents, and reasons for resistance.

According to Yukl & Gardner (2020), leaders must be aware of organizational political processes. Before making major changes, you need to identify potential supporters and opponents. In the case of the latter, it is not only the circle of persons, but also the degree of expected resistance that is important. Based on Ásványi *et al.*'s (2023) empirical research conducted among SMEs, resistance to change has moved from fourth to second place among employee-related problems. This represents a significant shift compared to the pre-Covid period, as it was about 10 percentage points less common before Covid.

5. Build a broad coalition to support the changes.

Yukl & Gardner (2020) emphasizes that making significant changes would be too big a task for a single leader, therefore building a coalition of supporters inside and outside the organization is essential. Internal supporters are usually mid- and lower-level managers, and external supporters are consultants, major clients, or managers of financial institutions.

6. Use working groups to manage changes.

According to Farkas (2013), in the beginning, even a few people are sufficient to manage the change, but in the meantime, their number must be increased to a sufficient extent for the change to take place. With their central role in the coalition, the top management can demonstrate their commitment to the new, but they do not necessarily manage the team. Team work outside the normal hierarchy is important. One of the important tasks of a strong management team is to overcome the resistance of followers, during which communication plays a prominent role. Great care should be taken to eliminate rumors and misunderstandings.

7. Fill key positions with competent change agents.

These 'change agents' actually implement the change. They come from people who are committed to the vision of the future and who know how to communicate well. Key employees who show no willingness to implement the new vision must be replaced. This quick action has a double advantage. In addition to removing those who resist, it also convinces those who remain of the seriousness of the intention to change (Yukl & Gardner 2020).

8. Empower competent people to help plan and implement change.

According to Farkas (2013), followers must have sufficient power to overcome obstacles arising from different systems and structures (e.g. inflexible job description and performance evaluation system). Organizations usually underestimate the difficulties of change, so it is advisable to support unconventional ideas to remove the barriers to change.

9. Create dramatic, symbolic changes that have a direct impact on the work.

Yukl & Gardner (2020) proposes dramatic changes that significantly affect the daily life of the organization's members, thereby making it more obvious that change is indeed inevitable and will happen. These can also affect the way of working, but they can also take a cultural form, including various new rituals and ceremonies.

10. Prepare people for change by explaining how it will affect them.

Alternate successes and failures can make life difficult for even the most dedicated employees. According to Repisky (2023), in examining failures, interviews with numerous SME leaders reveal that sometimes we need to let go of certain things we become accustomed to. It is not necessary to hold on to everything, quite the contrary. Difficulties are easier to deal with if employees anticipate them and know how to deal with them. It can be useful to ask employees who have already gone through a similar change to talk about their experiences (Yukl & Gardner 2020). It is therefore worth discussing the expected typical problems and finding a solution to them before they arise. According to Veresné (2013), various metaphors and similes can also help to explain seemingly complicated essential elements in a simpler way.

11. Help people deal with the stress and difficulties that major changes can cause.

It can often be difficult for people to accept the failure of previous administration, many feel personal responsibility for the fact that the organization is forced to change. To manage stress, it can be useful to start trainings or create communities that can help each other to cope with these difficulties (Yukl & Gardner 2020).

12. Let's give the opportunity for initial successes that increase self-confidence.

Based on the writing of Farkas (2013), this is the moment when the change occurs, in order to maintain enthusiasm, the achievement of objectives must be rewarded. Measuring the short-term positive results and communicating them from the management can provide additional motivation for the employees, as they feel that they are on the right track. The satisfaction of the employees is extremely important so that they are willing to persevere during the change.

13. Check the change process and take the necessary corrective steps.

Farkas (2013) emphasizes that one of the possible pitfalls is the early declaration of victory. The more people need to be involved in the implementation, even new entrants may be employed. As a rule, the change that has taken place falls short of the plan to a certain extent, but it can still be successful.

14. Keep people informed about progress.

When there are few visible signs of the new strategy being implemented, employees may wonder if things are going well with the change, or if everything will go back to the way it was. It can give cause for optimism if they are informed about the successful progress of the program. It can further increase satisfaction if, even when partial successes are achieved, small ceremonies are held, where successful performers are recognized (Yukl & Gardner 2020).

15. Show optimism and continuous commitment to change.

Several people may be responsible for managing the change, but the employees identify the number one manager as the primary supporter of the change. As a result, you must ensure your commitment to the end, which does not only mean communicating about it, but investing time and resources to overcome obstacles (Yukl & Gardner 2020).

16. Rooting of new solutions.

According to Farkas (2013), if this point is omitted, the process would end without lasting results and the organization would return to its original state. The new norms and values can be integrated into the culture of the organization in case of a change deemed successful. The process of change essentially never ends, with continuous training and the appointment of leaders connected to the changes, it is possible to create something permanent.

I carry out the testing of the above steps in the framework of primary research. In practical application, it is important to consider whether there is a difference between the current and the desired frequency of the steps, specifically identifying the steps that respondents currently perceive as insufficient.

METHODOLOGY

I carried out the investigation in the framework of primary research among managers of SMEs. The data was collected using a self-filling online questionnaire method. I used reachability sampling, the base population was reported by the executives of SMEs located in a region of Hungary. I compiled the change management questionnaire based on the statements in Table 1 illustrated in the Literature review chapter. The respondents responded on a 5-point Likert-type evaluation scale to the frequency with which the application of the given change management step is appropriate for them in the case of a consciously planned change, as well as how they would like to change it in the future. After multiple rounds of sending out, a total of 100 evaluable responses from more than 1,000 questionnaires were returned. When this number of items was reached, the questionnaire was closed. The sample includes organizations from manufacturing, services, and trade in almost equal proportions. Nearly

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70% of the responding leaders have a higher education degree. A limitation of the research is that the findings apply exclusively to the leaders of the organizations included in the sample. The Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.894 shows that the used scale is reliable. Using a paired sample T-test, I checked whether there is a statistically significant difference between the averages of the responses to the currently used and desirable change management habits, that is, whether the respondents want to strengthen the change management habits suggested in the models. Based on the results, it can be revealed whether the respondent is aware of what behavior could be a 'better leader of change'.

RESULTS

Based on the reviewed literature, the subject of my research has not yet been tested in the literature, but I think it is appropriate to examine it, because may provide novel results. Table 2 shows that the ideal behavior received higher values for all sixteen change management steps. Within the steps, the deviation values are almost the same for the current and ideal cases. The difference between the considered ideal and the current level is significant at 1% for each step when examined with a paired sample t-test. The difference between the averages was the largest for step 11, 'Help people deal with the stress and difficulties of major change' (0.57), and the smallest for step 2, 'Create a sense of urgency about the need for change' (0.36). That is, on average, the respondents want to change the former to the greatest extent, and the latter to the least extent. These two steps are related to each other to some extent. Therefore, the respondents do not want to increase the sense of urgency, even though it is an important element of change management, since according to Kotter (1995), more than half of the changes fail due to the failure of this step. The leaders don't have to skip this step to make the transition stress-free. The manager can handle this skillfully, by not being driven by urgency from above, but by building on the employee's internal motivation, creating a promising, new and attractive opportunity for the employee. In this case, the transition is less stressful, because anticipation becomes dominant instead of fear. Of course, stress can also arise despite all these efforts, since according to Drucker (1999), it is human nature that even if the change brings serious benefits, everyone wants it to happen as late as possible. Due to this difficulty, Armenakis *et al.* (1996), change management has become a key organizational competency of modern managers. According to Yukl & Gardner (2020), it can be useful to organize training sessions or create mutually supportive communities to deal with these difficulties. These trainings and discussions can draw attention to the fact that events beyond our control can also cause changes, so we should not always blame ourselves for the consequences. This approach can help facilitate the process of change.

The 'Make dramatic, symbolic changes that affect the work' received the lowest average value (2.99) as shown in Figure 1. They also want to increase this frequency the least (3.37). The responding leaders are therefore more wary of introducing dramatic changes. According to Kotter (2007), these symbolic changes can be of great importance. In the case of larger organizations, the top management consciously tries to become a living symbol with its everyday actions for the sake of successful transformation. If the desired change is related to the reduction of the ecological footprint, for example, the top manager consciously uses bicycles or public transport instead of own cars. This can be used by the leader for consistency in both work and personal life. This is often not easy, it may involve resignations, but it helps to institutionalize change.

The highest average value occurred at step 13, 'Monitor the progress of change and make any necessary adjustments' shown in Figure 2. The current (4.01) and the ideal value (4.44) were also the highest. What is striking and interesting is that they would like to significantly increase the current high average value, which indicates that they feel the need to check and take corrective steps even more than at present, based on their past experiences.

It is impossible to predict all the difficulties that will be faced in the future. Many things can only be learned through our everyday actions, and continuous monitoring is essential for this learning process (Yukl & Gardner 2020).

Not only more complex changes can pose difficulties. Obstacles may arise even at the beginning of hiring new employees. One reason for this could be the lack of sufficient information between the employee and the employer about each other. This can be particularly problematic when filling key positions. According to the signaling/screening model describing the informational aspect of education, individuals send voluntary signals to communicate their hidden attributes and abilities (e.g., investing in education). The employer, on the other hand, can establish conditions that enforce this signaling (e.g., interviews, trial tasks). According to Kun (2013), a difficulty is that the functioning of the signaling/screening model is not manifested during education, but rather upon entering the job. In many cases, only then can the learning process begin, which includes the aforementioned monitoring.

Table 2: The currently applied and ideal frequency of change management steps.

Change steps		average	std.dev.	t	av.dif.
1. Analysis of the organization and its necessary changes, identification of problems and their possible solutions	current	3.85	0.76	-7.40**	0.55
	ideal	4.40	0.67		
2. Create a sense of urgency about the need for change	current	3.72	0.77	-5.46**	0.36
	ideal	4.08	0.72		
3. Communicate a clear vision of the benefits to be gained	current	3.78	0.77	-8.85**	0.54
	ideal	4.32	0.74		
4. Identify likely supporters, opponents, and reasons for resistance	current	3.54	0.96	-5.29**	0.39
	ideal	3.93	0.96		
5. Build a broad coalition to support the change	current	3.52	0.85	-6.48**	0.50
	ideal	4.02	0.82		
6. Use task forces to guide the implementation of changes	current	3.37	0.95	-6.75**	0.62
	ideal	3.99	0.94		
7. Fill key positions with competent change agents	current	3.59	0.93	-7.26**	0.54
	ideal	4.13	0.85		
8. Empower competent people to help plan and implement change	current	3.74	0.69	-7.74**	0.51
	ideal	4.25	0.69		
9. Make dramatic, symbolic changes that affect the work	current	2.99	0.94	-6.01**	0.38
	ideal	3.37	1.05		
10. Prepare people for change by explaining how it will affect them	current	3.87	0.72	-7.70**	0.47
	ideal	4.34	0.66		
11. Help people deal with the stress and difficulties of major change	current	3.39	0.95	-7.98**	0.57
	ideal	3.96	0.97		
12. Provide opportunities for early successes to build confidence	current	3.44	0.97	-7.87**	0.53
	ideal	3.97	0.93		
13. Monitor the progress of change and make any necessary adjustments	current	4.01	0.72	-6.41**	0.43
	ideal	4.44	0.67		
14. Keep people informed about the progress of change	current	3.75	0.76	-7.54**	0.46
	ideal	4.21	0.70		
15. Demonstrate continued optimism and commitment to the change	current	3.87	0.81	-6.38**	0.37
	ideal	4.24	0.81		
16. Rooting of new solutions	current	3.85	0.78	-8.41**	0.54
	ideal	4.39	0.71		

***Significant at 1%*
Source: Own editing

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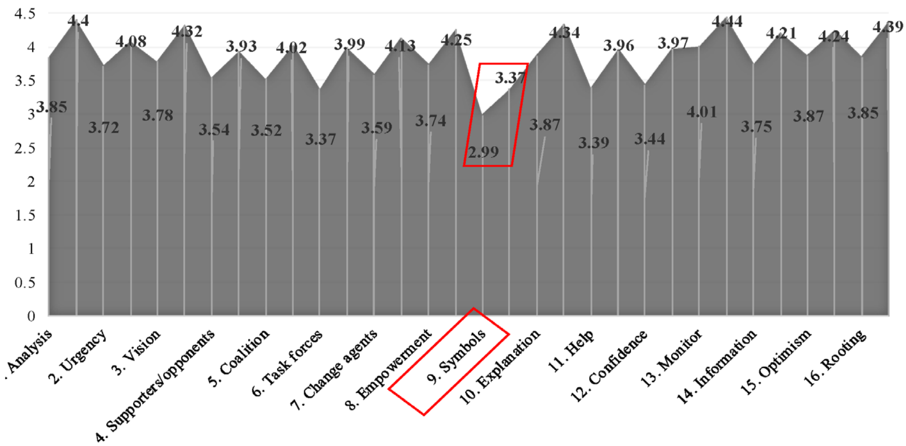
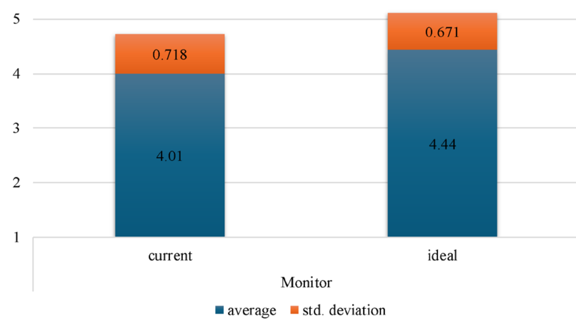
Figure 1: The values of the 'Make dramatic, symbolic changes that affect the work' step compared to the others.



Source: Own editing

Figure 2: Current and ideal mean and standard deviation of the step 'Monitor the progress of change and make any necessary adjustments'.



Source: Own editing

The effects of the changes on the various segments of the organization must be collected. One of the most common ways to do this is for managers to hold progress review meetings with key people (Yukl & Gardner 2020).

When interpreting the results, it is important to consider that in the case of SMEs, leadership attitude and capabilities are critical factors. Szanyi-Gyenes & Almási (2021) highlight that the leadership role defines the strategic direction of the business, the management of internal resources, and goal-oriented decision-making. This is particularly crucial for the success of change management, where the attitude and engagement of leaders fundamentally influence employee commitment and the sustainability of changes.

Hagl *et al.* (2024) highlights the importance of employee involvement, which can be achieved through consultation and joint decision-making. In addition, Abawari *et al.* (2024) emphasizes the significance of a constructive culture and transformational leadership for successful change management. Based on Milovanovic *et al.* (2022) among SMEs, organizational commitment, career commitment, and job satisfaction positively influence employees' preparedness for organizational changes. Chatzinikolaou & Vlados (2024) studied micro-enterprises and found that micro-enterprise owners perceive change management as a relatively unfamiliar process. However, it is worth drawing their attention to the importance of proper change management, as many of their direct competitors place significant emphasis on it, which could result in a competitive disadvantage.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Based on the literature analysis and the primary research results, it is advisable to supplement the broadest 14-step model found in the literature with an opening and a closing step. As the opening of the model supplemented with 16 steps, the analysis of the organization and the joint identification of problems with the employees can therefore increase the commitment of the workers, which can also increase their activity. The responding managers are still using this step with great frequency, which appears as the 2nd most important of the 16. This can be achieved through online platforms with anonymous feedback or by utilizing workshops and focus groups. At the end of the process, rooting the changes is considered equally important. This ensures that the change is maintained in the long term. This step is currently in the first third, and among the desirable steps, it was placed third on the podium. Its implementation can be supported by redefining organizational values, organizing training sessions to ensure the mastery of new processes, highlighting success stories, and establishing a reward system. In the case of both additional steps, based on the results of the t-test, the managers want to significantly increase their frequency. These results confirm the importance of supplementing the model, that is, including opening and closing.

Control appears as the most important factor, which represents one of the closing factors. This suggests that they may have past experience in declaring the success of a change early. Measuring back in time and making continuous corrections can be important in order to achieve the desired goal. In the next step, feedback and information to the employees is only possible if we have information about the progress that confirms the respondents' opinion. It is recommended to establish a continuous, two-way feedback system where employees not only receive information but also have the opportunity to share their opinions, ideas, and concerns.

Dramatic, symbolic changes are less valued and they would not change this in the future either. Presumably, the respondents consider that these dramatic changes would significantly affect the daily life of workers to such an extent that they would be afraid of innovations. It may be worth drawing their attention to the fact that these symbolic changes make it clear to the members that the change is inevitable and will really happen, which is complemented by the other steps directly related to the workers (5. creation of a broad coalition, 8. empowerment, 11. stress management, 12. ensuring initial successes) can actually help the success of the change. Resistance can be reduced if symbolic changes are accompanied by a communication campaign that emphasizes the benefits of the change and its positive impact on employees.

The application of the new model may be necessary in situations where the organization is changing its strategy or introducing new structures and processes. If the organization's goal is to create a more open, innovative, or customer-centric culture, the steps of the model can support this process as well. The model is particularly useful for SMEs, where direct employee involvement and the role of leaders are crucial.

As a direction for future research, it would be valuable to analyze which of the mentioned steps lead most quickly and effectively to the desired changes. Further investigation could focus on the differences between SMEs' change management practices and those of large corporations, the impact of organizational culture and leadership style on the success of change management, and the ways in which digital tools can enhance the efficiency, effectiveness, and traceability of these steps.

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