

Change Management for Radiologists

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Abstract

Change management refers to the research, science, and tools that prepare, equip, and enable individuals to adopt transformation successfully. Implementation of this discipline involves familiarity with an organization's culture, people, and structure. Several frameworks exist within which radiologists can successfully apply these concepts. With changes occurring within health care and within the field of radiology itself, it will be increasingly important for radiologists to familiarize themselves with and adopt the principles of change management in their practices.

Key Words: Change management, organizational culture, strategic planning, transformation

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INTRODUCTION

The specialty of radiology is constantly changing. New modalities and evolving protocols are increasing our clinical capabilities. Technological advances such as deep learning continually challenge and expand our specialty. Along with the political and financial dynamics of health care reform, the pace of change seems to be accelerating. Almost every radiology organization is experiencing dramatic transformations as we face regulatory mandates and socioeconomic pressures along with culture movements such as the American College of Radiology's Imaging 3.0.

For any organization, implementing change can be disruptive. Change management has emerged as a recognized discipline that has been embraced by leading corporations. The principles of change management as applied to radiology have been featured at a variety of industry and professional conferences [1-5]. Change management has also been discussed at the past two Radiology Leadership Institute Annual Summits; however, there have been relatively few articles dealing with this topic in the radiology

literature. Most radiologists understand that change is happening, but they are unaware of the principles and tool sets available to help guide their practices and organizations through these potentially dramatic transitions.

DEFINITION OF CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Change management refers to the research, science, and tools that prepare, equip, and enable individuals to adopt transformation successfully. Although change management focuses on the individual, a related subject matter, organizational change management, considers the full organization and what it needs to do to change. Although the definitions are specific, the terms are often used interchangeably [6].

Change management is concentrated on how to implement successful transformations: how to get from the status quo to a desired change. The subject matter is the theory, tools, and methods of guiding an organization through a change process, as opposed to the strategic decision making that determined that change was necessary. Authorities in business education have come to recognize how vital these considerations can be for successful organizations. Metrics for success include achieving the targeted transformation, efficient utilization of resources, minimizing unnecessary disruption or conflict, and reaching sustainability.

There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its

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success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things.

—Niccolo Machiavelli

HISTORY OF CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Before the 1990s, few publications in the business literature referred to change management. A pioneer in organizational development, Richard Beckhard, identified the process of change as a distinct “effort” [7]. William Bridges is credited with being the first author to address the human side of change. He described states of transition as the ending, the neutral zone, and the new beginning [8].

In the 1990s, change management became popularized by industries (especially technology firms) undergoing rapid change. Change management theory was driven by leading consulting firms working with several Fortune 500 companies, such as GE’s “Change Acceleration Process” [9]. The structured approaches that emerged became popular as they proved to reduce both costs and risk. During this period, several seminal books were published that related to the people side of change management theory. Lexicon began to form. Many of the guiding principles that survive today evolved during this period. These works, such as John Kotter’s “Eight Step Process for Leading Change,” served to bring change management into the mainstream of business theory [10-16].

The 2000s marked the formalization of change management as a discipline. Additional research provided practical, scalable, and reproducible tools and processes that could be applied to change projects. In this era, the people side of change management grew in both awareness and credibility. Organizations began creating job positions specifically for the implementation of change management.

Further formalization of the discipline occurred with the launching of the Association of Change Management Professionals. In parallel, a drive began to create standardization and certification for the profession.

Today, many organizations are looking to institutionalize change management. Standardization is becoming an expected and important element of most corporate projects. Leading companies are establishing “change leadership” competencies, training employees from frontline workers to top management.

CHANGE MANAGEMENT FOR RADIOLOGISTS

Change might be internally driven versus externally mandated. With respect to internal change, the goal is

often to improve something—service, turnaround time, efficiency, better economic return, and structured reports. External mandates may include changes in laws, methods of reimbursement, or the development of new technologies. These changes, whether based in process or culture, planned or unplanned, voluntary or imposed, all have a common process for implementation: change management.

Implementation of such operational or strategic plans can be disruptive for both the practice managers and the radiologists. Considerable energy, time, and resources can be consumed by these efforts. Therefore, utilization of the science and discipline of change management in radiology presents an important opportunity. Preplanning for a new or altered structure and acquiring skill sets focusing on the process of transformation contribute to the success and sustainability of these projects.

Beer and Nohria have posited that there are two basic theories of change [17]. In one, Theory O, there is a focus on what has traditionally been deemed the “soft” side of implementing change. Areas of concentration within this theory include the idea of creating a new culture, building strong emotional connections with employees and colleagues, and strengthening teamwork skills. The other, Theory E, highlights the economic value of a change initiative. Though increased economic value is generally defined in shareholder returns, the concept is easily translated to a radiology practice where additional measures such as patient outcomes, patient satisfaction, ordering provider satisfaction, and report turnaround time can be optimized. Most often, practice leaders will need to employ a skillful combination of these theories in the implementation of a change management project.

Various templates for change management have been published and are well established. These models continue to be refined and newer models are proposed as the science and discipline mature [18,19]. The references should help radiologists identify a change management model that works best for each practice or organization. Many of the more popularized systems include the following principles:

- **Articulate the reason for change.** Develop a compelling argument delineating why the practice must move away from the status quo. Create a sense of urgency that change must occur now. Appropriate information should be provided to partners and employees so that everyone understands why going into

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