A case study on how leadership styles are applied to influence change recipient reactions

A case study of office reallocation at British American Tobacco, Stockholm Filial

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Abstract

In a world that is characterized by constantly ongoing change, the ability to cope with both internal and external change is increasingly deemed an important one not just to survive, but to thrive. In order to implement change within organisations, there has been a growing realization in recent research of the importance of not just taking into account the actions and behaviors of those who implement change, but also the reactions of change recipients.

This study aims to contribute to the understanding of leadership styles used throughout the change process, in explicit relation to change recipient reactions.

This was done through an explorative case study, where both change agents and change recipients were interviewed at the local office of an international corporation that had recently implemented an office move. A framework was created that suggests that change initiatives go through four stages, where different leadership styles are best utilized. Yet the findings indicates that changes of a smaller nature do not require the full implementation of the four stage model, focusing instead on the intermediate stages. However, changes of a larger nature would require successfully going through all stages. Rather than discarding the full model, we leave it to provide researcher with a framework for researcher and practitioners to investigate and utilize in order to provide a better understanding of change processes, leadership styles and their relationship to change recipient reactions. The study also touches on the role of information and resistance to change, and emphasises the need for researchers and practitioners to focus on the level of engagement created among change recipients, rather than the purely on the amount of information conveyed.

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"Change in all things is sweet"
-Aristoteles

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Definitions

Brief explanation of central concepts for the thesis.

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Key concepts

Change	A transition from a present state towards a desired future state made by individuals, teams and/or organizations
Change actor	An individual that is involved and/or affected by the change effort within the organization.
Change agent	An individual who modifies organizational systems or human capability in order to attain a higher output or self actualization
Change recipient	An individual who carries out the organizational interventions that have been initiated by the change agent
Grade	An internal, firm specific rating system used to rationalise the compensation policy structure for all employees
Organizational change	It refers to those changes that take place in an organization that influence people's lives
Resistance to change	The lack of support and the attempt to hinder processes of change by the employees at a firm

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1. Introduction

In modern day society, change is an inevitable constant we are faced with. Any organization, whether small or large, is affected by international business developments due to an increasingly globalized world. In order to remain competitive, firms need to adapt to technological changes and unanticipated events, which require new ways of doing things (Bielinska-Kwapisz, 2014). At the same time, it is becoming increasingly difficult to predict the direction these changes may go. This, in combination with the fact that "research suggests that failed organizational change initiatives range from one-third to as high as 80% of attempted change efforts" (Beer and Nohria, 2000; Higgs and Rowland, 2000; Hirschhorn, 2002; Knodel, 2004; Sirkin *et al.*, 2005; Kotter, 2008; Meaney and Pung, 2008; Whelan-Berry and Somerville, 2010) makes this topic increasingly relevant and pressing.

Further, while changes such as organizational restructurings, layoffs or mergers are large changes that draw a great deal of attention, changes of a smaller nature can have effects far out of proportion to their size. For example, when the Swedish Consumer Agency moved office, this necessitated replacing nearly all their lawyers, who did not wish to move, resulting in a reduction of effectiveness (Digréus and Andersson, 2006).

This thesis will therefore attempt to shed some light on the relationship between the most appropriate leadership styles depending on the stage of the change process, taking into account change recipient as well as change agent actions, in the context of small change.

1.1 Previous research

1.1.1 Knowledge gap

A great deal of research has focused on the effects of change, leaving a gap in terms of research on reactions to change. This has resulted in a call for more investigation into the gap in the recent past (Oreg *et al.*, 2011), which has begun to be met (Holten and Brenner, 2015), yet even so, there remains a great deal of room for further research and knowledge addition to theory.

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Resistance to change is a primary determinant to the successful implementation of change efforts, and the successful overcoming of resistance to change is heavily contingent on what reactions they elicit upon those who are subject to the change. Change recipients' positive appraisal of change can therefore be considered a prerequisite for successful implementation of change (Holten and Brenner, 2015; Lawrence, 1954).

In that context, the lack of research into this area can be considered highly surprising, and further stress the need for greater research into the topic. Initial research into the topic has contributed to knowledge on the effect of leadership styles on the reactions of change recipients, focusing upon transformational and transactional leadership (Holten and Brenner, 2015).

Additionally, we identify several specific knowledge gaps within the area of change recipient reactions. Specifically, positive recipient reactions to organizational change are less well researched, with the majority of research focusing on negative outcomes (Oreg *et al.*, 2011; Holten and Brenner, 2015). In addition, little research has focused on change agents' reactions to the reactions of change recipients and until recently, the focus on change recipients was neglected (Oreg, 2006; Oreg *et al*., 2011). Finally, there are conflicting results with regards to the role of information and change recipient resistance to change. Many studies have found that information reduces resistance (Miller *et al.*, 1994) while in at least one study, it was found that information had a positive impact on resistance (Oreg, 2006), which has resulted in a call for closer scrutiny of the complexity of the relationship to information and resistance, than has existed before (Oreg *et al*., 2011).

Managers are important change agents, facilitating the success of organizational change and influencing the degree to which followers embrace change (Armenakis *et al.*, 2007). Leadership style is thus a key explanatory factor for overcoming resistance to change.

While Schein has discussed that organizational learning, development, and *planned change* cannot be understood without considering culture as the primary source of resistance to change (Schein, 2004), we place our research firmly within the context of the interaction

between change agents and change recipients, rather than investigating the relation of culture and change.

1.2 Purpose

We place our research in the context of change recipients' reactions, which, as stated previously, is a comparatively neglected field in comparison to research on change outcomes. Another less researched area is positive reactions to change, as opposed to negative reactions to change.

Another closely related topic that has been discovered to have a greater degree of complexity than might have been previously thought, is the role of information in generating or reducing resistance to change. Information has generally been thought to have a positive correlation with reducing resistance to change. However later research has called for investigating the complexity of the relationship between the *content* of the information (rather than the amount of information) and resistance to change (positive-negative).

This leads to our research question:

> *How does the applied leadership style depend on where in the change process the change agent is found?*

1.3 Scope

The thesis investigates the effects of moving to a new office, but does not investigate the content of the office itself. The thesis does not focus on the role of the organisation specific culture in the context of implementing change, but instead takes aim at the relationship between the leadership styles of change agents and reactions of change recipients, that is, the dynamic between change actors.

The empirical data was gathered at an essentially autonomous unit in Stockholm, which is part of a larger organisation, with 26 employees at the unit in question. This was a desirable structure and size for an organisation to investigate as it would allow for interviewing a large proportion of those who were affected by a change, and those who lead the change. Finally, the aspect of being part of a larger organisation could help in having the resources

to implement a change as moving to a new office, as in this specific case. This is beneficial as a move of work offices is a very visible change.

The broader initiative of moving offices spans over two years with two separate moves, however we focus on the second move which took place in November 2015. While the first move is outside of the main focus of the thesis, it is discussed in the sense that it is part of the background and the initiatives leading to the second move, which we are investigating.

Finally, in terms of change reactions, we focus on the intermediate stages of change, that is those reactions that occur *during* the change, as opposed to before or after (as presented in Table 2: Change processes in relation to Change Recipient Reactions).

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2. Methodology

This chapter presents the our methodological research choices. We commence by introducing the research method (2.1) characteristic of a qualitative case study. An explanation of the case study follows, including its design (2.2) and the case selection (2.3). The chapter concludes with an overview of the method of data analysis (2.4) and a commentary on the validity and the reliability of the study (2.5).

2.1 Research method

The method we chose in order to answer the research question and reduce the knowledge gap, was a qualitative research method through an exploratory case study, which followed after a close review of the literature, both for methodology research and the leadership within the change management field.

The case study was carried out through semi-structured, in-depth interviews. The choice of qualitative research was motivated by it being especially appropriate when writing about less well researched areas, such as the areas in question in this case, related to change recipient reactions as stated in section 1.1.1. Knowledge gap. Given the stated knowledge gaps, which we intend to reduce, a qualitative research method was deemed particularly motivated.

A characteristic of qualitative research is an inductive view of the relationship between theory and research, that is theory is generated out of research (Bryman and Bell, 2013). This lead naturally to the primary choice of method being inductive, by having empiric data be the foundation of the theoretical framework that is developed. The meaning of inductive method is that generalized conclusions are drawn from the observation (Bryman and Bell, 2013).

The inductive method is likely to contain elements of deductive method. In our case, the initial development of the theoretical framework has influenced empirical gathering which ensued later, which can be referred to as an iterative strategy (Bryman and Bell, 2013).

2.2 Case Study

The choice of case study as a method was chosen in relation to the research question. The appropriateness of different research methods are related to the type of research question posed, the extent to which a researcher has control over behavioural events and c) the degree of focus upon contemporary events (Yin, 2014). Case studies are a preferred approach when "how" or "why" questions are asked, when the researcher has little control over behavioural events and when the focus is on contemporary events (Yin, 2014; Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2010).

Method	Form of research question	Requires control of behavioural events?	Focuses on Contemporary Events?
Experiment	How, why?	Yes	Yes
Survey	Who, what, where, how many, how much?	No	Yes
Archival Analysis	Who, what, where, how many, how much?	No	Yes/No
History	How, why?	No	No
Case Study	How, why?	No	Yes

Table 1: Relevant Situations for Different Research Methods (Yin, 2014)

In our case, the research questions ask "how" and "why" questions, b) did not require control of behavioural events, c) and we focus on a contemporary event in which the relevant behaviours cannot be manipulated.

2.2.1 Case Study Design

At the core of case studies is the attempt of shedding light on a decision: why this decision was taken, how it was implemented and with what result (Schramm, 1971).

We chose to base our analysis on a single case study, as opposed to a multiple case study. Single case studies are appropriate when the case is capable of confirming, challenging or extending established theory (Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2005). Multiple case studies on the other hand, aim to strengthen findings and reducing the issues of the artificialness of only

dealing with one case, and allow for more generalizable results (Yin, 2014; Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007).

Typically, multiple case studies are considered to be more robust and compelling (Herriot and Firestone, 1983), however, criticism has been raised to the manner in which researchers use multiple cases to indicate that they provide statistical significance. Instead, one should look at it as a choice based on utilizing resources. Given the choice of utilizing the same amount of resources for pursuing research topics, pursuing a single case study allows for greater depth (Dubois and Gadde, 2002; Easton 1995).

2.3 Case Selection

We based our choice of company for the single case study on three specific criteria, as will be explained below:

Firstly, we wanted to investigate a firm who had gone through a process of change that was completely finalized by the time we came in contact with them (Miles and Huberman, 1994). It is preferable to examine current events over which the researcher has very little or no control over (Yin, 1994). Furthermore, it was of importance that the organization had experienced the process of change recently in order to ensure the interviewees had their recollections of the events fresh in their minds.

Secondly, we sought a multinational corporation with a local presence in Sweden in order to increase the diversity of interviewees we could reach out to in an office with a manageable size for our case. We aimed to get in touch with subjects who had first hand information about the situation but from the view of both change agents and recipients, with different ranks and a variety of backgrounds. By increasing the heterogeneity of the group we could overcome the potential ethical problems of bias and numerous perspectives in the group of respondents (Anyansi-Archibong, 2015).

Finally, it was important to be able to carry out the interviews face-to-face with the workforce at the organization and for the interviews to be in a language both interviewers are fluent in, Swedish or English. Having this type of interview technique allows for

synchronous communication both in time and space which is more spontaneous and advantageous in terms of social cues which can add extra value to the responses (Opdenakker, 2006).

The selected case study organization, British American Tobacco (BAT) Stockholm Filial adhered to all three criteria and was therefore chosen[1].

2.4 Data Analysis

An abductive approach was used to analyse the data, which is a combination of inductive and deductive approaches (Dubois and Gadde, 2002). An inductive approach means gathering data first, then generating theory, whereas a deductive approach implies using existing theory, which guides the data analysis (Saunders *et al.,* 2009).

As we analyzed the collected data in tandem with gathering it, both interview notes and the transcriptions of the recorded audio files, the material was categorized into common themes that were gradually identified. This lead to an initial list of themes being discussed and written down into one document, after both researchers had finished transcribing and re-reading the material. Thus, codes were gradually identified by reviewing transcripts and field notes individually, listing and consequently categorizing recurring topics.

Having agreed on themes, we further revisited the empirical material, transcribed and otherwise, to find evidence for or against those themes, as well as other ones that came up along the way. This lead to a systematic and gradual discovery of themes, which assisted in the generation of theory (Bryman and Bell, 2013).

2.5 Quality considerations

We utilized two of the most commonly used tests for measuring quality concerns, validity and reliability. (Yin, 2014; Bryman and Bell, 2013).

2.5.1 Reliability

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[1] A more detailed introduction to the firm is found in Section 3.1 Case organization overview.

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Reliability refers to the *consistency* of a measure of a concept, (Bryman and Bell, 2013), that is the extent to which it can be replicated over time, and with different researchers, with the same results. The purpose of ít is to reduce case specific bias and errors (Yin, 2014).

In order to measure the level of reliability, the researcher should ask themselves three questions (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2012) which we took into account throughout the process.

1. Will the measures yield the same results on other occasions?
2. Will similar observations be reached by other observers?
3. Is there transparency in how sense was made from the raw data?

In order to ensure that different researchers can replicate the case study, the original researchers need to document the procedures in their case. Documentation is then key for ensuring reliability. A tactic to ensure reliability related to documentation is to develop a case study database (Yin, 2014), which we did by creating an orderly document with all transcriptions, field notes from interviews and the unclassified material (such as a newsletter) available to us. The database is not necessarily polished, but serves to preserve the collected data in a way so that it can be retrieved (Yin, 2014).

An aspect that can improve reliability is to have more than one researcher working together, which serves the purpose of being able to compare notes and findings from reviewing the same source (Bazeley, 2013). We were able to review our notes from interviews, as well as to compare reactions and opinions following each interview, and discuss eventual discrepancies or commonalities until we arrived at a joint opinion. We also had the opportunity to contact every interviewee after the interviews if anything was unclear

2.5.2 Validity

"Validity refers to the issue of whether or not an indicator (or set of indicators" that is devised to gauge a concept really measures that concept" (Bryman and Bell, p. 159).

Phrased differently, "Validity is concerned with whether the findings are really about what they appear to be about" (Saunders *et al*, 2009, p. 157).

Validity consists of construct validity, internal validity and external validity (Yin 2014). Construct validity can be defined as "the extent to which an operationalization measures the concept which it purports to measure", (Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2005, p. 83), that is the extent to which the study investigates what it actually claims to study. In order to ensure construct validity, we used multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2014), by having a pre-study with change agents, receiving internal documents related to the change (floor plans, newsletters), external documents (annual reports) and semi structured interviews. However, as the study takes aim at change agents and change recipients, the primary source of evidence is the data we received from conducting the interviews. However, by spreading the interviews out over time, we were able to further refine the contents of our interview guide.

Internal validity answers the question, 'are the results within the study true?' (Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2005). In other words, for internal validity we have to be confident that casual variation among variables our study is suggesting is true, that *x* is really causing the variations in *y*, at least as one of the influencing factors (Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2005). However, internal validity is primarily a concern for explanatory case studies, and is inapplicable to exploratory case studies, such as ours, which is why we did not test for it. (Yin, 2014)

External validity deals with the issue of whether the findings of a study are generalizable and can be applied to other contexts/situations other than the specific case study (Yin 2014), which is considered to be an issue for single case studies (Bryman and Bell, 2013; Saunders *et al*., 2009). This is a primary motivator for attempting to describe the change event, change organisation and change actors (agents and recipients)with detail in order to highlight the contextual specifics.

Based on our research, our findings are most applicable to changes of a smaller or incremental nature. This result is then intentional, as we chose to focus on a single case

study as opposed to a multiple case study, in order to provide greater depth, given the same amount of resources to utilize (Easton, 1995).

3. Data collection

This chapter outlines the data collection process by presenting the process of selection of the interviewees (3.1) as well as how the interview process was carried out (3.2) and documented (3.3).

3.1 Selection of interviewees

For the purpose of this thesis we interviewed a total of 10 employees. They represented a large proportion of the departments, from across hierarchies and both from the group of those who implemented the change project as well as those who were affected but didn't have an active role in the process. This variety in interviewees allowed us to see a broad range of responses and experiences in relation to the change.

All of the employees at the firm were affected by the change project on an equal level, which made the potential number of interviewees 26. In other words, we were able to carry out in-depth interviews with over one third of the office; all of the change agents except for one and with a fourth of the change recipients. Prior to the final in-depth interviews, we carried out two pre-study interviews with two change agents to gather as wide of an understanding as possible of the change process (Van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2002).

In terms of the interviewee selection, we were able to decide autonomously who we wanted to interview (including the proportion of males-females, change agents-change recipients and range of 'grades'). This freedom of choice reduced the selection bias that would otherwise have been present if the organization of choice had taken the decision for us.

The number of interviews carried out allowed for a solid understanding of the change process as well as of the implications of leadership in this specific case study. Although not the entirety of the office was included in the study, it can be considered a sufficient number to draw comprehensive conclusions (Morse, 1994; Creswell, 1998; Mason, 2010).

3.2 Interview process

3.2.1 Pre-Study

Initially, we interviewed two change agents of the process on an individual basis, one of whom was our initial contact person with the case organisation and who had also been the main coordinator of implementing the project. Our purpose was to gather as much information as possible about the change and the nature of it, as well as about the organisation in a broader sense. Based on this, we were able to narrow down the research topic further, giving weight to our decision not to investigate culture further, as leadership style was deemed a more relevant factor. These initial interviews were held over the phone, which holds the benefit of being a cheap and quick way of communication (Bryman and Bell, 2013). We also received some written material about the change, such as a map of the planned design and examples of the communication letters used to communicate the change to the change recipients.

Further, before conducting the interviews we reviewed Kvale's (1996) ten criteria of a successful interviewer and expanded it with Bryman and Bell's (2013) two criteria, in order to refresh interviewing skills. These skills lead to good interviews in the way that they result in rich knowledge, while creating a beneficial situation for the subjects, in an ethical manner (Kvale, 2007). Additionally, we asked ourselves "just what about this thing is puzzling me (us)?" in accordance with Lofland and Lofland (1995).

Together, these tools helped us in planning for the interviews, including the creation of an appropriate interview guide. Perhaps most importantly, the pre-study interviews allowed us to better focus on the relevant actions and beliefs of change agents and change recipients with regards to the change process, as opposed to a descriptive focus around the change itself.

3.2.2 Semi-structured Interviews

We utilized semi-structured interviewing, as we found it appropriate to gain sufficient information and insight when answering "how" and "why" questions, which as mentioned in section 2.2, are used in case studies. In posing questions, we utilized a mixture of Kvale's (1996) nine different types of questions, depending on the circumstance.

While we used a semi-structured interviewing format, we prepared an interview guide based on our pre-study preparations, which acted as a list of questions under specific topics. While there was room for some individual unique questions based on information that was revealed in the interview, on the whole, the same questions were asked and with a similar wording (Bryman and Bell, 2013). However, the greatest amount of change in interview questions appeared after the first day of interviews, in preparation for the second day, as the questions in the interview guide were refined and changed based on the information that had been revealed, in order to better yield results. These were to a broad extent questions that had already been posed during the first day of interviews, but in an impromptu and flexible fashion, as responses to information revealed during the interview.

3.2.3 Interview Setting

The interviews were conducted in a closed door conference room. Both interviewers were present at all times of the interview and undertook slightly different roles; one being more active, engaging in the communication and guiding the conversation while the other adopted a more observant position to gain an insight on the social cues (Opdenakker, 2002). The roles were changed regularly to avoid bias in the researcher's opinions. After every interview, the researchers shared the reactions that the interviewee had elicited in them and took notes.

All of the interviews were done on an individual, face-to-face basis. This was done to ensure the respondents' anonymity and in order to avoid group pressure from fellow colleagues (Winch, *et al.*, 2012). Moreover, we looked at a change that had affected the whole workforce and that had been implemented internally, so it was more convenient to carry out individual interviews (Frey and Fontana, 1991). By allowing the interviewees to speak privately with the two interviewers and introducing the conversation with a non-disclosure agreement as well as an explanation of how the data would be treated, they could feel at ease sharing their true thoughts and emotions (Woods and McNamara, 1980).

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3.3 Data documentation

All interviews were recorded using a recording device, with the express permission of each interviewee. These were recorded in order to improve data accuracy.

Transcripts of all the interviews, were created in their entirety, with the intent of providing a number of benefits in accordance with Heritage (Heritage and Atkinson, 1984), such as allowing for thorough examination of what was said. Despite the time consuming nature of transcribing, this was a valuable and necessary asset in performing the case study. Additionally, we discussed impressions and thoughts of each interview, transcribing the interviews on separate, anonymous documents (devoid of personal identifiers). This was done to maintain confidentiality and anonymity while maintaining ease of accessibility (Saunders *et al*., 2009).

The interviews themselves were held on two separate days, with four work days between them. After conducting the first day of interviews, we were able to transcribe and analyse those interviews, which allowed us to discuss and analyse this information in order to get the most out of the next day of interviews**.**

4. Theoretical framework

This chapter presents the theoretical framework used in our thesis and is composed of an overview of Leadership styles (4.1) and one of Change theory (4.2) which are combined to create a Synthesis model (4.3).

4.1 Leadership styles

The development of leadership theory has lead to certain trends emerging in terms of describing leadership theory, with four types of leadership often being referred to in the literature. These are Laissez-faire, Transactional, Transformational and Change-oriented leadership (Appelbaum *et al.*, 2015). A brief overview of these leadership styles follows.

Laissez-faire leadership can be classified as the absence of leadership. Those who enact this leadership style are characterized by the avoidance of accepting responsibility, being absent when needed, failing in following up on requests for assistance, ignoring problems and avoiding expressing views on important issues (Appelbaum *et al.*, 2015; Schedlitzki and Edwards, 2014).

Laissez-faire leadership is seen as being the least effective, due to its strong element of passivity (Schedlitzki and Edwards, 2014) which can be related to the fact that passive leadership is negatively correlated with effectiveness (Bass, 2015).

Transactional leadership is responsive and its basic focus is on dealing with present issues, as opposed to transformational leadership which is proactive (Zakkai, 1994). It is indicative of a leadership where people only complete tasks when there are external rewards (Penn, 2015). Given its focus on external rewards, transactional leadership is more closely related to changing behavior by instrumental means; that is, by using formal rewards and penalties, which is part of the classical carrot and stick methodology (Frei, 2006). It can be summarized as leadership with a contractual agreement between leader and follower. The leader orders the follower to perform a task, and in return for the performance he rewards the follower.

As such, Transactional leaders are characterized by contingent reward and management-by-exception styles of leadership (Bass and Avolio, 1993) and is more likely to emerge as the dominant leadership pattern in organisations with tasks involving routine situations, in environments with no acute sense of impending crisis or major changes and a corresponding low level of basic anxiety (Zakkai, 1994).

Transformational leadership meets organizational needs, aims to satisfy higher order individual needs and encourages overcoming self interest for the benefit of the organisation (Golm, 2009; Appelbaum *et al.*, 2015). It is considered appropriate for dealing with organizational change (Bass and Riggio, 2006; Eisenbach *et al.*, 1999) and strengthens the satisfaction of followers, their organizational commitment, self-efficacy and empowerment during change (Bommer *et al.*, 2005).

Transformational leadership focuses on providing for higher-order needs, induces followers to overcome self-interest for the benefit of the organisation and empowers followers to participate in the process of change (Bass, 1985; Yukl, 1989; Appelbaum *et al*., 2015).

Conditions that favor transformational leadership are when basic level of anxiety is not high and attention is given to the developmental needs of the led (change recipients). This leadership style is less reliant on the organisational context compared to other leadership styles, and it relies more on the leader's view of themselves as transformational (Zakkai, 1994).

However, it is important to recognize that transformational and transactional are complementary and previous research indicates that most successful leaders exhibit both transformational and transactional leadership simultaneously (Schedlitzki and Edwards, 2014).

Finally, change-oriented leadership deals with how leaders treat and involve employees during change. Successfully utilized change-oriented leadership contains key elements of transformational leadership, but in a more concrete manner with greater situational

specificity (Herold *et al.*, 2008) and can be viewed as the application of behaviors within the situational context of change implementation (Appelbaum *et al.*, 2015).

4.2 Change theory

4.2.1 Reactions to change

Attitude towards change can be defined as "a tridimensional state composed of cognitive, affective, and intentional/behavioral reactions toward episodic or continuous change" (Bouckenooghe, 2010). In other words, the attitude a person shows towards change depends on an individual's' feelings toward the change, their opinion on the usefulness of the change and the actions that will be taken in the future. This is then reflected in a continuum ranging from strong positive attitudes (commitment to change) to strong negative attitudes (resistance to change). However, there has been a tendency historically in the literature to focus more on resistance to change, as noted by Bouckenooghe (2010), than to commitment to change.

Resistance to change can be defined as the lack of support and the attempt to hinder processes of change by employees (Coetsee, 1999). It is a common feature of the workplace that may take many forms and may have equally as many reasons for occurring. Authors such as Kotter and Schlesinger (1979) believe that resistance to change can be a consequence of a number of things that are not necessarily inherent to every individual. These include: not wanting to lose something of value to oneself (Parochial self-interest); misunderstanding the factual implications of the proposed change (Misunderstanding); a negative attitude towards change in general (Low tolerance to change); and a belief that change is not necessary in the organization (Different assessments of the situation). These contributing factors to change originate from the idea that there is an improper communication of the change, which is supported by Kotter and Schlesinger's (1979) six change approaches to deal with change which commence with proper education and communication.

On the opposite pole of the continuum, but very closely linked to resistance to change is the concept of commitment to change (Coetsee, 1999). Commitment to change can be defined as more than a positive attitude towards change; it is a proactive behavior rather than tacit

support or the absence of resistance (Piderit, 2000). As described by Bouckenoughe (2010), commitment to change can almost be labelled as a positive problem-solving view on change.

4.2.2 Change Recipient Reactions to change

Change recipients are defined as those who carry out organizational interventions (changes) initiated by others (Bartunek *et al.*, 2006; Lines, 2005). For much of the history of the field, change reaction research has tended to focus primarily on change agents, with the implication that change recipients' understanding of change is similar, or should be similar to that of change agents' (Bartunek *et al.*, 2006). In the recent decade, more and more research has addressed change recipients (Oreg *et al.*, 2011), however studies have on the other hand tended to ignore change agents *responses* to change recipient reactions. This is a noteworthy gap in focus, given that how change agents respond to change recipient reactions are likely to have a strong impact on the change progress, and on the eventual success of the change initiative (Oreg *et al.*, 2011).

In a 60 year review of quantitative studies into Change Recipient Reactions, Oreg *et al.* created a model for describing change as a process relating to four areas (Oreg *et al.*, 2011):

Areas	Stage of change recipient reaction model
Pre change antecedents of change (recipient characteristics, internal context)	First stage
Change antecedents (change process, perceived benefit/harm, change content).	Intermediate phases of change
Explicit reactions (affective, cognitive and behavioural reactions)	Intermediate phases of change
Change consequences (work-related and personal consequences)	Last stage

Table 2: Change processes in relation to Change Recipient Reactions

Pre change antecedents of change are conditions that are independent of the organizational

change and which existed prior to the introduction of the change, that is recipient characteristics and internal context.

Change antecedents are aspects of the change itself that influence change recipients' explicit reactions (change process, perceived benefit/harm, change content).

Explicit reactions to change are defined by using a tripartite definition of reactions to change (Piderit, 2000; Oreg, 2011), namely affective, cognitive and behavioral components of the reactions to change.

Change consequences are more indirect change recipient consequences, dealing with post change attitudes toward the organization toward the organization as outcomes.

Holten and Brenner (2015) have responded to the call for "evaluations of change and intervention processes by focusing exclusively on the change process," (Semmer, 2006), that is by focusing on the relationship between antecedents and explicit reaction (the intermediate phases of change). In a quantitative study, they investigated the role of transactional and transformational leadership styles on positive reactions, finding that:

1. Both leadership (transactional and transformational) styles were platforms for enacted engagement to be expressed
2. Follower change appraisal was influenced by manager engagement.
3. Leadership style had a significant, direct impact on followers appraisal of change.
4. Results suggesting that managers impact followers cange appraisal differently at different stages of change.

We chose to look further into information and resistance to change based on what we found in the actual case study; there was an active decision to limit questions and flow of information during the early stages of the process (before the contract was signed). The justification was that it would otherwise have created expectations that were hard to meet and it would have been logistically difficult to take everyone's opinion into consideration.

We found some intriguing actions meant to limit, or control the information change recipients' were subjected to, in the case. Most research has found that information reduces resistance to change (Miller *et al.*, 1994), but in some cases information was found to be positively related to resistance (Oreg, 2006). The reason for this apparent paradox has been discussed to be the impact of information, which depends on the content of said information. Further, perceived control over the outcome is likely to moderate the effect of information on the reaction to change. Receiving more information without the ability to change anything can increase frustration and resistance to the change (Oreg *et al.*, 2011).

4.2.3 Kotter's Eight Step model of change management

The most commonly used change management model over the past two decades has been Kotter's Eight Steps to change management. A summary of these steps follows (Kotter, 1995; Kotter, 1996):

1. Establish a sense of urgency
2. Form a powerful coalition
3. Create a vision
4. Communicate the vision
5. Empower others to act on the vision
6. Plan for and create short term wins
7. Consolidate improvements and produce still more change
8. Institutionalise new approaches

Kotter's Eight Steps are based on a series of errors that he identifies in organizations when they attempt to go through a process of change. Before any change process can commence, it is important to be aware of the market one's organization is in and to examine the competitive realities in it. By going through this process of examination one can identify and further discuss crises (or potential crises) as well as possible opportunities. This *establishes the sense of urgency of a change (1)*. Once it has been established, it is vital to assemble a group within the organization who has enough power to lead the initiative. This group must work together as a team, with a common goal to create a *powerful guiding coalition (2)*. The last stage in the planning process is to *create a vision (3)*, or in other

words, set a goal which will serve as a direction to lead the change effort. This vision needs to be supported by strategies that need to be taken to achieve the vision.

When the vision and the strategies to achieve the vision have been created by the powerful guiding coalition, you need to involve the rest of the members at the organization. This is firstly done by *communicating the vision (4)* using every communication vehicle possible, reaching out to all change actors. The guiding coalition reinforces this, teaching the desired behaviors by setting an example the change recipients can follow. After the example has been set, the coalition has to get rid of obstacles and change the necessary structures that undermine the new vision. They need to encourage risk-taking and *empower others to act on the newly established vision (5)* through nontraditional ideas, actions and activities. The adoption of these new and risky actions can be encouraged by planning for and creating visible performance improvements and setting reward systems for those change recipients that are involved in the improvements. This stage of *planning for and creating short term wins (6)* appeals to the change recipients, who will be more inclined to adopt the changes proposed by the new vision.

During the last phase of the change process, the coalition must *consolidate the improvements and continue producing more change (7).* Now that some change recipients have adopted the change, the change agents must continue changing the systems, structures and policies that don't align with the vision. This can be achieved by hiring or promoting and educating employees who can implement the vision and reinvigorate the process with new projects. Lastly, and in order to ensure a successful change process *the new approaches need to be institutionalized (8)* developing the means to ensure future leadership development and succession.

Kotter's model was elaborated drawing on the author's personal experience and was aimed at practical purposes rather than theoretical and academic means, however no evidence has been found against the model and it remains a recommendable reference (Appelbaum *et al.*, 2012). However, due to the difficulty of implementing all of the steps (Sidorko, 2008; Penrod and Harbor, 1998) and the need for a long follow-up of the change project to cover all of the phases (Penrod and Harbor, 1998; Betters-reed *et al.*, 2008) it may be more useful

and constructive to combine Kotter's framework with other change management theories to adapt the model on an ad-hoc basis (Graetz and Smith, 2010; Dopson *et al.*, 2008). For the above reasons, we will attempt at merging Kotter's classical Eight steps with transformational and transactional theory to generate a solution to the change process at hand, taking into account change recipient reactions.

Recent developments

Recently, Kotter published an updated version of his classical Eight Steps to Change in which he adapts the model to suit the present market conditions (Kotter, 2012). In the present version, he refrains from calling his guidelines 'steps' and instead names them 'accelerators' because he claims that steps are rigid and finite and respond to episodic change whereas accelerators are always at work. The 'steps' are also thought to be driven by a core group whereas the accelerators attempt to include greater parts of the organization. Finally, the 'steps' work well in a traditionally hierarchical organization as opposed to accelerators, that require the flexibility of a network. However, due to the nature of this change process: it is a small and constrained change effort, led by a minor group within an organization that is more in line with the traditional-hierarchical firm, we refrain from using Kotter's updated model.

4.3 Synthesis model

In order to investigate our research question, *How does the applied leadership style depend on where in the change process the change agent is found?*, and discuss our findings, we have combined the literature on leadership styles, change recipient reactions and the Eight Step Change model to generate a theoretical framework on how to ensure successful implementation of change, as seen in Figure 1.
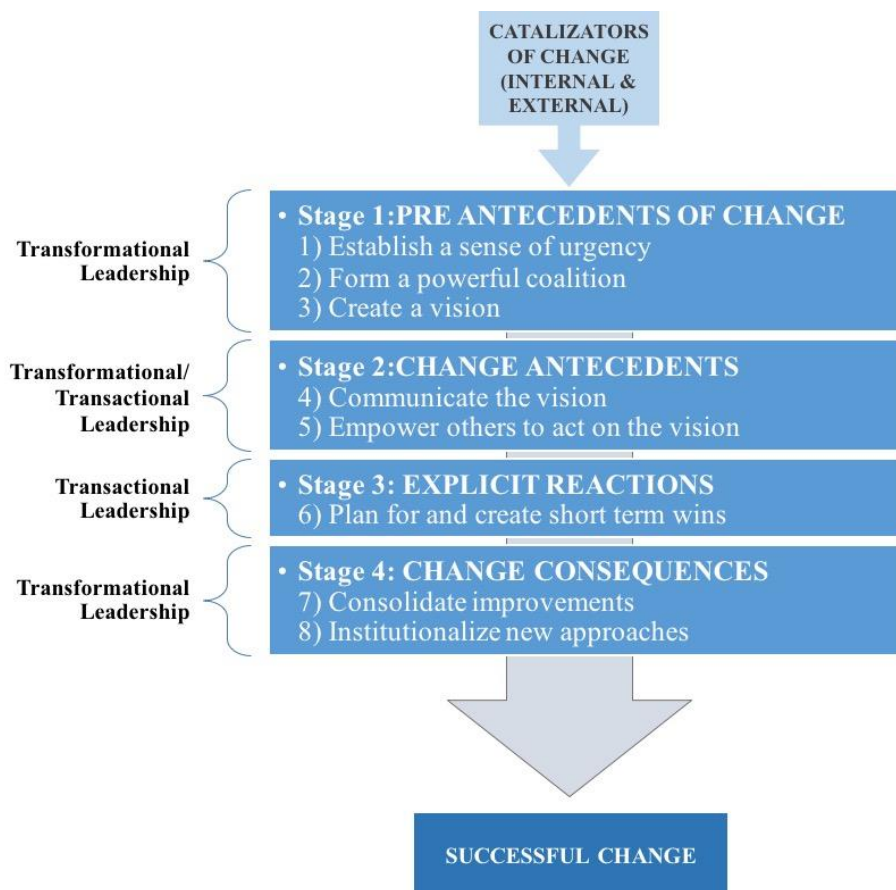
Figure 1: Theoretical synthesis model

Our framework analyses not only the reaction of change actors but rather the interaction and the influence that change agents and recipients have on each other. It suggests that in order to achieve a successful implementation of organizational change, an organization needs to go through a series of eight steps that will prepare the organization for the change, help them undergo the change and then consolidate it within the organization. By methodically following these phases, the change agents ensure that change recipients engage in the process and commit to the new practices, avoiding potentially negative retaliation in the form of resistance to change.

Change recipients react to these eight phases in different ways depending on how far along the change they perceive to find themselves in. These reactions can be summarized into four stages: pre-antecedents of change, change antecedents, explicit reactions and change consequences.

Lastly, and in order to be able to ensure a successful outcome from the change initiative, it is crucial to take into account these elicited reactions through adequate leadership styles. During the first stage, which lays out the base for the change, a transformational leadership style is in order to ensure that there is an exchange of ideas between the change recipients and agents and that higher order individual needs are met. The second stage corresponds to the start of the actual change process and it needs both transformational and transactional leadership styles in order to continue ensuring change recipient satisfaction at the same time as moving the project forward. During the third stage, the change is implemented fully and it therefore requires a more transactional approach, setting guidelines and directives to serve as a guide. The fourth and final stage is after the implementation and it attempts to make change recipients believe in the changes that have been made and institutionalize the new approaches.

Taking into account these three dimensions of the model will result in a reduction of recipient resistance to change which is key to achieving successful change implementation.

5. Empirics

This chapter presents the empirical findings of our case study. We begin by introducing the case organization (5.1) and the change project, based on the descriptions provided by the change actors (5.2), and present the background by discussing the previous movie (5.3). We then present the change actors' perceptions throughout the four stages of the change process (5.4) and conclude with an overview of the key issues we came across during the gathering of empirical data (5.5).
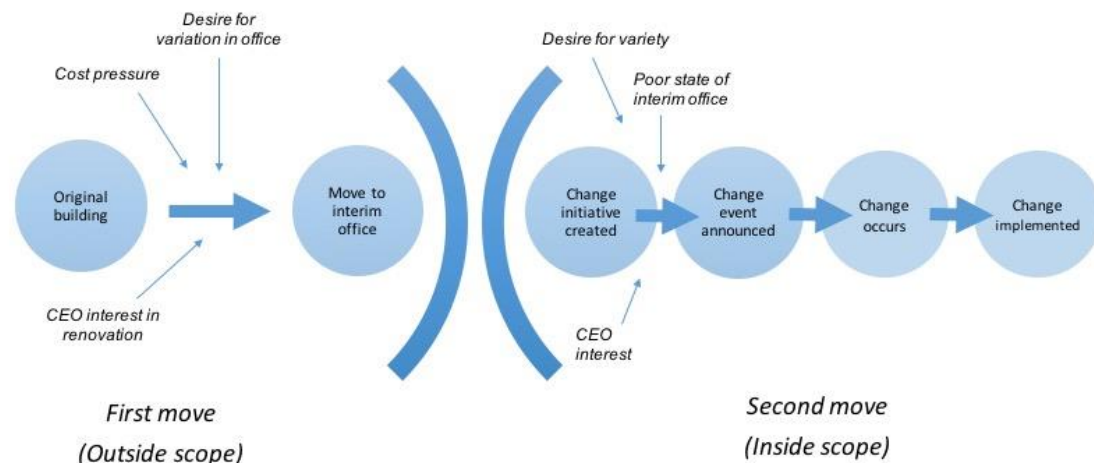
Figure 2: Change initiative timeline

5.1 Case organisation overview

The case organisation, British American Tobacco is a global organisation with over 200 brands sold in more than 200 markets worldwide. The firm has a workforce of over 50,000 people across the globe. They produce a variety of tobacco and nicotine-based products alongside other next-generation products such as vapour products and battery-powered electronic devices.

Our thesis focuses on the implementation of moving work office for the entire Stockholm unit at British American Tobacco Sweden, which, as mentioned, consists of 26 individuals. The physical change took place during the month of November 2015 and was completed over a weekend. One of the main reasons for the need for a move is the merger in 2008

between House of Prince, a Denmark based tobacco company and British American Tobacco. In the aftermath of the merger, there were layoffs at the Stockholm office and transfers to Denmark, which became the Nordic and Baltic regional headquarter, reducing the need for a larger office in Stockholm.

5.2 Change project description

The introduction of the office move was an initiative that was originally proposed by the General Manager at the BAT Stockholm office approximately two years ago. The need for a move was driven by several internal and external factors. These included the fact that the originally used facility was going to be renovated, cost reduction pressure, a need for a smaller office after personnel downsizing, and an interest in variation of office space. Although the General Manager has been substituted twice since then, the initiative was continued by his successor. According to members of top management at the firm who were present during this process, the organization had gone through a period of reorganization which had resulted in a decreased workforce. After the restructuring process, the office was left feeling empty to a great extent. This, in combination with the original need to cut costs led the GM to continue the initiative.

During the first couple of months of 2015, BAT Stockholm was given the opportunity to terminate the rental contract for their office free of charge and to be temporarily moved into an interim office until they found a final location. This offer was accepted and BAT Stockholm switched offices almost immediately. The interim solution was located wall-to-wall with the original building and was expected to be a very immediate and short-term solution, especially given the fact that the office space was very small and considered "*not appropriate for the type of operations that BAT carries out*".

Soon after this move took place, a team of six people was put together to lead the initiative, partially determined by their work duties and partially by personal interest. This project team was then responsible for all the practical aspects of the project, starting with planning, search for new office space, interior design of the new location once it had been found and the physical move. The project's implementation and completion can therefore be considered to have taken place simultaneously.

The total time spent changing offices from the initiative beginning and until completion ran over a period of almost two years. We have however focused on the most immediate move, between the interim and the new office. The first move, from the old office to the interim one is however touched upon tangentially although it is outside of the scope of this research since it lays the foundation and serves as a preparatory initiative to understand the second.

5.3 Change project background / the move to the interim office

In May 2015, the Stockholm Office of BAT Sweden moved office, and ended up wall to wall to their old one. Six months later, they would move again, pressured by the poor fit of the temporary office for their operations, as well as the negative reactions to the office itself, in addition to it being, from the start, a temporary solution.

The circumstances of the move to the temporary office have been touched upon above, but deserve to be included as its own section, as the move to the temporary office has had consequences in change recipient reactions, especially in determining pre change antecedents of change. This can be related to that the employees have been aware of the *need* for the change initiative (a move) for a long period of time, two years, but also the impact of negative reactions to the interim office, on reactions to the final office.

The move to the interim office was caused by the fact that the original office was slated for renovation, which caused the search for a new office. As they were required to move in any case, the change initiators believed that they might as well look for a permanent new office, which is the long run cause for the final move. In the end, they were unable to find a new, appropriate office in time, which lead to the interim move. While the interim office received a negative reaction to it, it's important to recall that the move to the interim office was determined by a lack of other options, as they were unable to find another appropriate office in time.The final office was smaller than the original one (which was related to needing space for fewer personnel), but the interim office was even smaller, too small for their reduced workforce, resulting in a "cramped" office. The move itself to the interim office was "chaotic", as the office not fully ready for operations after the completion of the move. Staff returned to see the office in disarray, requiring a day of work to fix by the

employees, time that could have been spent working. This was a change that elicited negative change recipient reactions, as well as serving as a warning for change agents to prepare better for the next move.

5.4 Change actors' Perceptions throughout the Change process

5.4.1 Change initiative created
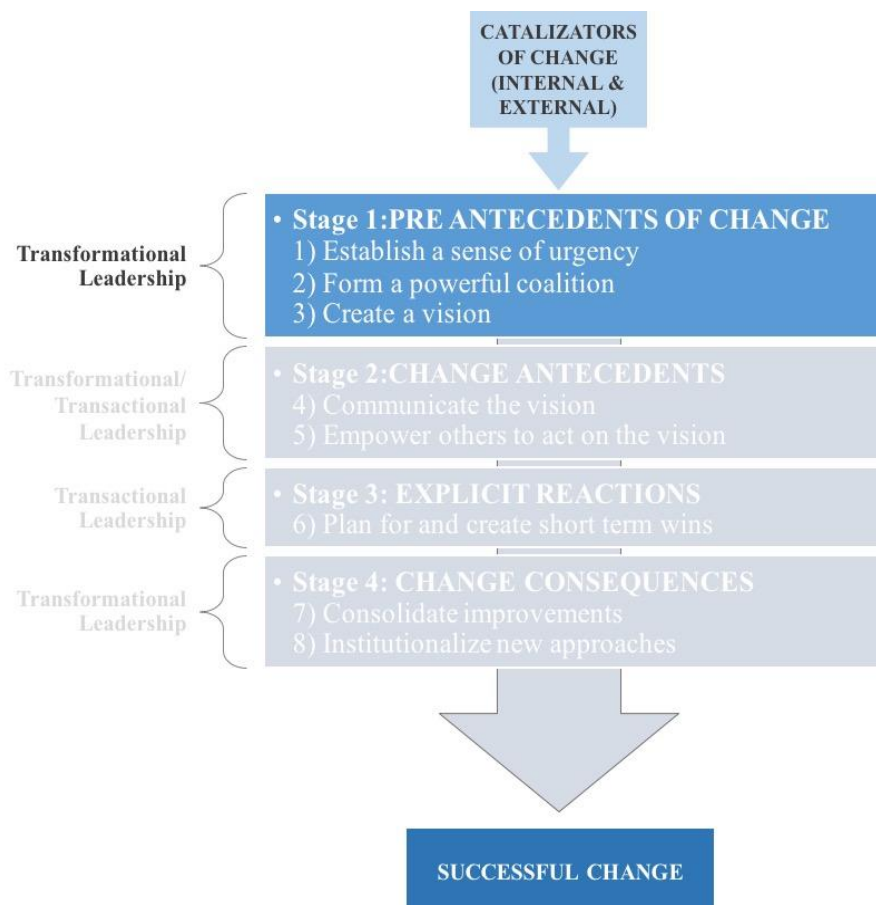
Figure 3: Theoretical synthesis model (Stage 1: Pre Antecedents of change)

The change recipients were first made aware of the upcoming move after the contract for the new office was signed. However, there had been a project team working on finding a new location several months before the announcement.

This team had been formed after the the initiative to move had been decided by the then current General Manager (CEO) of BAT Sweden. The project team for the move consisted

of six individuals; it was lead by the HR manager, who had in her project team the local office HR manager, who was responsible for the project. The rest of the project team consisted of the Legal representative, Head of Finance, General Manager Assistant and the IT Manager (or Head of IT).

Although the change was small in scale, it implied changing offices that were next door to each other, a powerful change initiative group was set out from the start due to the potential negative consequences it could have on the firm. In terms of how they were chosen for the project team, some members were obliged to join the work group as a natural consequence of their normal duties. However, one person explicitly expressed that they chose to join the group due to a personal interest in the choice of location of the new office, and they believed that being part of the project team would allow them to have a say in this matter. The team was well aware of the potential consequences if the initiative failed; when asked about the possible outcomes if handled badly, they expressed that although the change was small in scale, it could result in high turnovers of personnel.

The need for a new office was driven by the temporary nature of the workspace that they were currently in. It was further accentuated by negative reactions to that office, which was described as being unmodern, old and cramped. When asked on their views on how and if they thought the temporary office affected opinions of the new one, change agents believed that the poor state of the temporary space had a positive effect on the reactions towards the new office. Although the change was generally perceived as small by the interviewees, it elicited strong opinions.

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Bachelor thesis in Management

5.4.2 Change event announced

CATALIZATORS OF CHANGE (INTERNAL & EXTERNAL)

Transformational Leadership
- **Stage 1: PRE ANTECEDENTS OF CHANGE**
  1) Establish a sense of urgency
  2) Form a powerful coalition
  3) Create a vision

Transformational/ Transactional Leadership
- **Stage 2: CHANGE ANTECEDENTS**
  4) Communicate the vision
  5) Empower others to act on the vision

Transactional Leadership
- **Stage 3: EXPLICIT REACTIONS**
  6) Plan for and create short term wins

Transformational Leadership
- **Stage 4: CHANGE CONSEQUENCES**
  7) Consolidate improvements
  8) Institutionalize new approaches
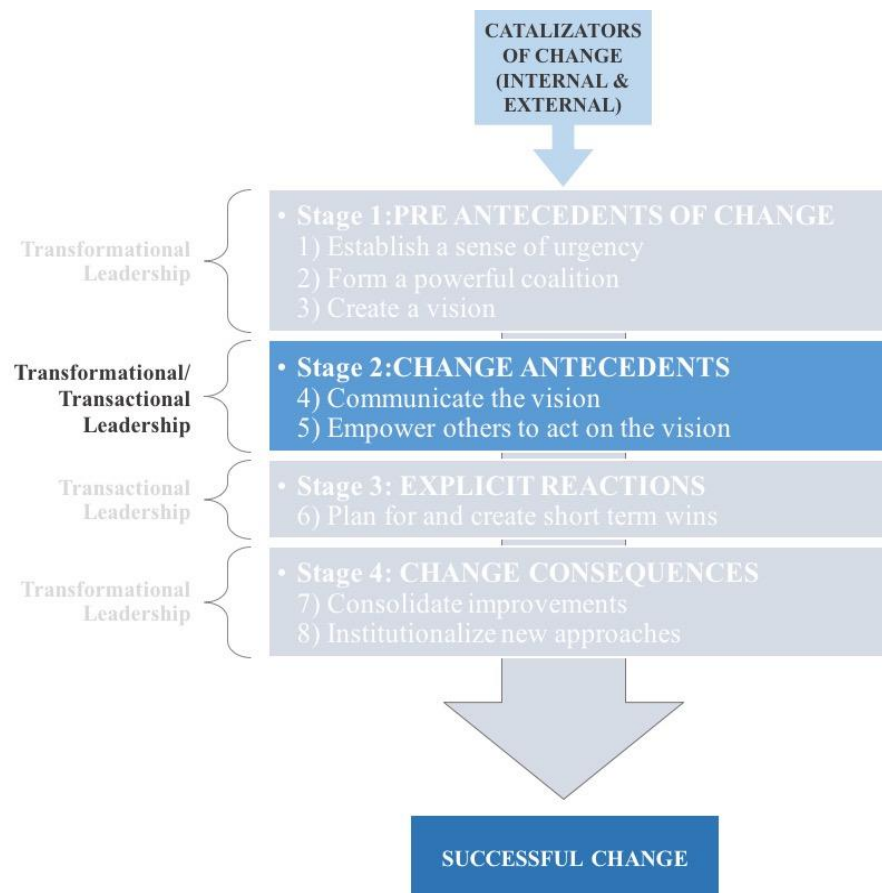
SUCCESSFUL CHANGE

Figure 4: Theoretical synthesis model (Stage 2: Change antecedents)

The change initiative wasn't announced at one specific event or through one individually identifiable source of communication given the relatively small nature of the change. Both change agents and change recipients identify the time of information to have been approximately three to four months before it took place. However, since the move from the interim office to the new office had been an ongoing process for a time span of six to eight months, change recipients were aware of the fact that the move was coming up and it didn't come as a shock when it was announced.

The change event announcement took place in a quite natural way through a combination of both oral and written sources of communication. Although uncertain as to the exact medium of communication used, most change agents identify the weekly formal-informal Friday breakfasts as a possible event where the idea was first presented. Following the first

announcement, the change agents continued the flow of information on a rolling basis through email and oral updates.

It is however noted by the change actors that when the change event was announced, a majority of the decisions regarding the move had already been made. As one change recipient expressed it when questioned about the timing of the information, "I don't think it matters too much what us employees think or say". This idea was further supported by the change actors, who identify that the time they informed change recipients about the change was intentionally late:

> "It is simply easier to make decisions that way. We [change agents] came to the conclusion that if you ask people too much, they [change recipients] will create expectations and we are never going to be able to satisfy them. […] So we communicated quite little, or we communicated as much as we could, but we waited on purpose to see that everything was done before we came out with the information[2]".

Although most decisions with regards to the new office had already been taken by the time the change recipients were informed about the event, their reactions were not resentful and the amount of communication is thought to have been sufficient. When the event was announced, change recipients were asked for input with regards to topics such as choice of chairs or suggested seating planning amongst other things through surveys as well as through more informal oral interactions. This was seen favorably by change recipients and they generally felt that their voices were being heard. In contrast, change agents show more awareness of the fact that they intentionally did not want to have too much input from change recipients and limited the communication with them to less important matters, since "*some type of discussion has to be allowed during a process like this*"[3].

The lack of resentfulness has also partially been identified by change recipients as being a consequence of being shown the new office location very soon after having announced the change event. Change agents invited the change recipients to the new office and gave them a tour of the building while it was still under construction. Change recipients have a favorable impression of this first early tour of the office. This made them feel included in

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[2] The cited text has been translated from Swedish to English (interview 1).
[3] The cited text has been translated from Swedish to English (interview 7).

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Bachelor thesis in Management

the project from an early stage even though most of the details had already been decided by the project team.
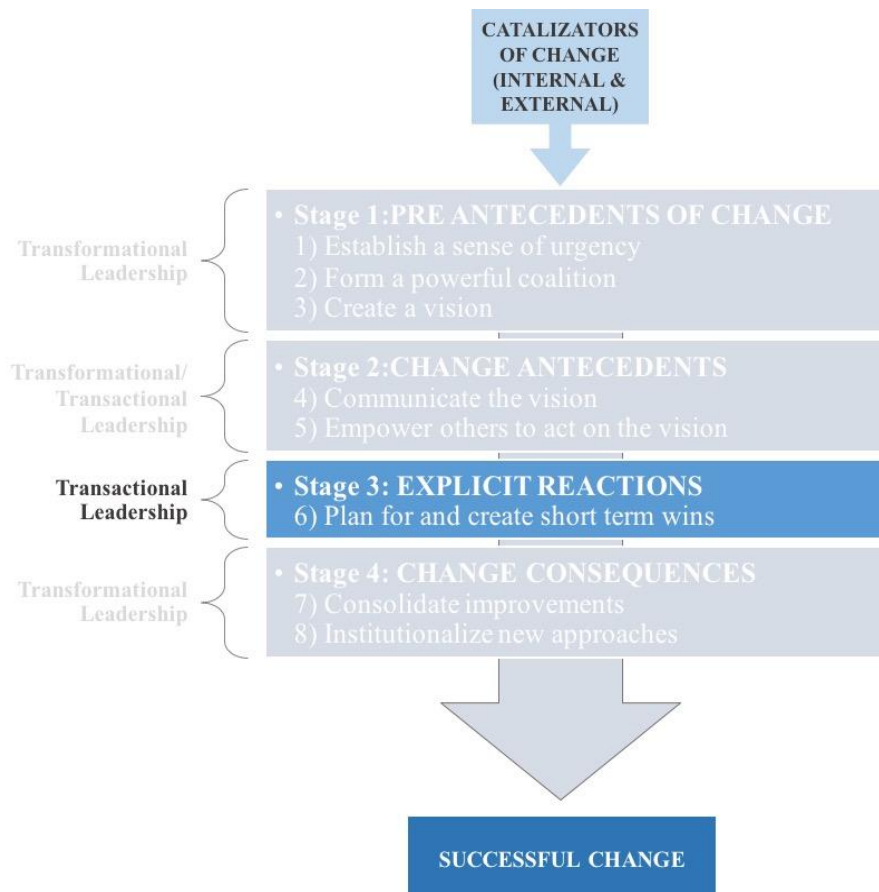
5.4.3 Change event occurs

Figure 5: Theoretical synthesis model (Stage 3: Explicit reactions)

The activity of moving into the new office location occurred over the course of a weekend, a short period of time, with a near instantaneous change implementation reaction on the following Monday. All the employees (change recipients and change agents) packed their personal belongings in labeled boxes on Friday, and were able to arrive at the new office on the following Monday, with their possessions next to their new desks. The office had been arranged over the weekend by some members of the project team, in order for the employees to be able to get back to work as fast as possible. The reactions to the planning and implementation stages this move were favorable among the change recipients and agents.

In preparing for the move, change agents specifically pointed out that they wanted the move to be as painless and quick as possible, since the previous move to the interim office had been "*complete chaos*"[4], with decoration haphazardly strewn about the office. This meant that the employees could not start working right away upon arriving at the interim office. It required several days of work wasted on fixing the internal environment before being able to return to their normal work duties. This yielded negative reactions among change recipients, which change actors were aware of for the next change.

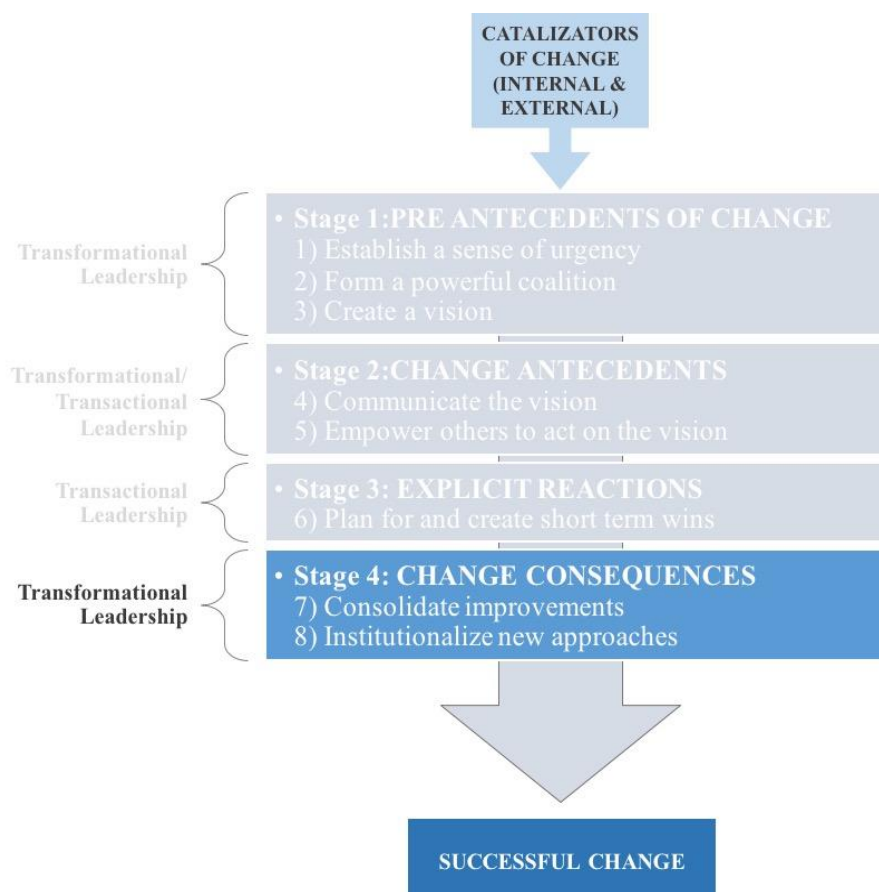5.4.4 Change event implemented

Figure 6: Theoretical synthesis model (Stage 4: Change consequences)

Looking back and comparing offices, both change agents and recipients agree on the fact that the new office is very light, newly renovated, has a fresh feeling, is aesthetically good

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[4] The cited text has been translated from Swedish to English (interview 8).

looking and that it is generally a professional working space. It is objectively considered to be an improvement from the previous location.

It is noticeable that the homogeneity in answers is a lot higher in the change recipient group. When asked about the reactions towards the new office, they all commented on the improved aesthetics of the office space, the garage space available in the building, and the fact that the location is still the same as before. This last point is considered to be positive, since "*it was already a location we had agreed upon*" and the change they were put through was therefore quite small.

On the contrary, the interviewed change agents show more variety in their answers. When this group was asked about the reactions to the new working space, they do acknowledge the fact that it was a positive change, highlighting the same aspects as the change recipients. However, they point out for whom and for what purpose it was a good change; for the BAT business it was considered adequate, but on a personal level, a majority of the change agents expressed that they were disappointed and put off by the fact that they hadn't been able to move closer to the city center. Although these slightly more critical comments came through during the interviews, change agents were more reticent to speak about the location and avoided the topic until directly confronted with it.

5.5 Overview of key issues

This division of steps can be considered a natural one, but in practice there is a great deal of overlap between them as is evidenced in the text. This can be related to the small nature of the change but also to the special nature of the initiative, where the implementation and completion are events that take place simultaneously.

A few themes appear throughout the process. The first is the discrepancy between change agents' and change recipients' understanding of how much the change recipients were involved in the process. Change agents do not feel they involved recipients in the change process to a great extent. Contrary to their belief, change recipients feel that they were incorporated in the change process and are positive to the experience.

Secondly, both groups of change actors consider the move to have been a positive change. While some change agents express disappointment in the final location, they express so solely on a personal level, admitting that it was good choice for the organisation as a whole.

The third theme that emerges is the impact of having a negative experience prior to the final move on expectations for similar changes in the future. While both parties expressed positive reactions to the new office, members of both groups spoke that this positive perception was colored by having a very bad experience beforehand, namely the interim office.

Finally, the small nature of the change, geographically speaking, is perceived as having great impact on the final decision criteria and the inability of change actors to complain about the final decision.

6. Analysis

Having identified the discrepancies between change agent and change recipient reactions to the change initiative, we focus on analysing and discussing them with regards to the theoretical framework presented in Section 4. We review the four stages of change recipient reactions methodically, starting with the change initiative being created (6.1) followed by the announcement and occurring of the change (6.2 and 6.3 respectively) and the aftermath once it had fully been implemented (6.4). Finally, a summary of the findings is discussed (6.5)

6.1 Change initiative created

The first stage of the change recipient reactions to change, the pre antecedents of change or when the change initiative is created comes through somewhat vaguely in the empirics. In accordance to Kotter's Eight Steps to Change model, this phase would correspond to the first three steps: establishing a sense of urgency, forming a powerful coalition and creating a vision.

The empirical data collected has shown that the change initiative came from within the firm itself rather than being an effect of an exterior threat or potential opportunity. Both change recipients and change agents identified the need for a change in office due to a number of reasons including cutting costs, excessive size of the initial office and the very reduced and poor conditions of the interim one. Since the sense of urgency and the common vision of how they needed to achieve the change was already deeply rooted and interiorized within the firm, these steps didn't need to be worked on actively. This furthers the fact that the formation of a coalition unfolded organically; a coalition was needed to lead the change, but it didn't require it to be powerful since the change was not going to be forced upon the employee's.

According to the theoretical framework established in Section 4.1 on Leadership styles, a transformational leadership is considered more appropriate at this stage since it encourages actors to overcome self interest for the benefits of the organisation and strengthens

recipients' commitment. However, once again, these objectives had already been accomplished before the change initiative began.

As evidenced through our empirical data, the change event was so deeply rooted in the firm by all actors that this first step of managing change recipients' reactions loses its practical relevance.

6.2 Change event announced

In order to successfully communicate aspects of the change (change antecedents) in a manner that will increase the likelihood of the success of the change project itself and to reduce eventual resistance to change, change agents need to successfully communicate vision and empower others to act on the vision, as discussed in the the theoretical framework. However, in the specific context of the case itself, the change agents communicated in a fairly one directional manner, limiting the engagement and incorporation of change recipients. The change agents did not empower others to act on the vision, but rather sought to retroactively (after the change was decided) include the opinions of change recipients to create engagement or involvement.

As proposed in the synthesized model, the successful change agent needs to utilize both transactional and transformational leadership in communicating (announcing the change). However, in the actual circumstances, the leadership displayed has been transactional in nature. This can be attributed to the scale of the change (small) and the change recipients' perceptions of change antecedents being positive. That is, they viewed the change process favorably (they were informed sufficiently), and find the change itself to be positive in terms of perceived benefit being greater than perceived harm and finding the content of the change being an objective improvement. The lack of a more transformational leadership in communicating/announcing the change can thus be attributed to a decreased need due to this wholehearted positive change antecedent reaction and the perceived (and actual) small nature of the change itself.

One way in which the change agents planned for and created short term wins to improve the explicit reactions of the change recipients was to bring them to the new office while it

was still under renovation. The behavioural reaction from the sense of involvement that resulted from this introduction of the facility impacted positively on change recipient reactions. While the office was not complete at that point, it still allowed change agents to show the visible improvements of the new office compared to the interim office.

6.3 Change event occurs

The leadership skillset required for this stage as put forward in the model is transactional, and as shown, this is what was utilized and displayed. As stated, the change event occurred over a very brief period of time, which is related to the "small" nature of the change. However, it was also an intentional decision to have it be executed over a short time period, related to the practical needs of the office (i.e. they must start work on Monday) as well as to ensure that the explicit reactions to the change itself were as favourable as possible.

This point was emphasized as the previous move had a poor reaction to the change event occurring, as the internal decoration of the office was then incomplete, requiring employees to work several days to fix it, valuables day in which both groups of change actors could not pursue their normal work tasks. By planning for the move in such a way that some of the change agents would fix the decoration and place personal belongings over the weekend, the change agents ensured that they would avoid the instant negative reactions that the old office had elicited (besides the physical nature of the office itself) and contributed to a positive beginning of reactions at the office.

6.4 Change event implemented

The implementation of the change event by change recipients very much aligns with the last two steps of Kotter's model: consolidating the improvements and institutionalizing the new approaches. According to both change recipient reaction theory and change management theory, this last phase is crucial to ensure continued acceptance and belief in the change as well as encouraging more actors to continue in the process of constant change. However, data from interviews reveal that the researched change initiative was considered a unique event rather than a gradual process of change. Very much in line with what was observed in the first step of recipient reactions to change, the individuals

subjected to the initiative are not in need of being convinced since they objectively have been able to see an improvement in their office and workspace.

Furthermore, change recipients' reactions have been taken into account throughout the process by balancing the transformational-transactional leadership styles, setting clear directives yet including some of their opinions. This has resulted in a positive response after the change event has been implemented. The appropriateness in communication and the objective improvement after the change event, result in a lack of importance with regards to this final phase as well.

However, it is interesting to point out that change agents' reactions haven't been taken into account in the same way during the process. According to leadership theory, transformational leadership is needed to strengthen commitment and satisfying higher order individual needs, and although this research has focused on change recipient reactions specifically, it seems that it would also be necessary amongst change agents to ensure a fully successful implementation. Since this was not paid attention to, we observe discrepancies and more variety in their level of satisfaction at the termination of the event.

6.6 Summary of findings

Having gone through and analysed the empirical data, the (small) nature of the change and its effect on the applicability of the theoretical framework is made clear. The most heavily weighted stages have been the intermediate ones; change antecedents and explicit reactions, whereas the initial and final stages haven't been as relevant.

Closely connected, is the fact that there is a lack of transformational leadership used throughout the process, which can at least partially be attributed to the effect of having recently undergone a negative experience. The negative experience implied that the groundwork for a lot of the transformational work had already been done in the sense that change recipients were already very aware of the need for the change. Both change agents and recipients felt a sense of urgency as a result of perceiving the interim office to be inappropriate. The final steps, which include interiorizing the change are not especially

focused on either since the negative aspects of the interim work space were changed for the better.

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7. Conclusion and discussion

This chapters begins with (7.1) revisiting the synthesized model and discussing the findings of the empirics, before moving to to a discussion (7.2) of the implications and limitations of the essay, along with providing suggestions for future research.

7.1 Conclusion

Analysing the empirical material reveals a general positive attitude towards the change among change actors. As stated, the differences that exist are related to personal agendas, and even then, those that consider it a "personal disappointment", still point to the change being a success for the organisation, and an improvement over the interim office. Further, it becomes clear that the applicability of the model is clearest in the intermediate stages (the second and third stage) of the model. This can be attributed primarily to the small nature of the change in question, and its brief window of required implementation, as opposed to a larger organisational change, spanning a longer amount of time in implementation, which would have required an approach that encompassed more stages of the framework.

Thus, rather than discarding steps from the initial framework in revisiting the model, we theorize that a smaller section of the framework is utilized when dealing with changes of a smaller nature, and allow the broader framework to remain, as a tool for others to use, and to further test its applicability.

In addition to this framework, we shed some further light on the relationship between information and resistance to engage. Rather than focusing on the amount of information delivered (or withheld) to change recipients, as some researchers have done (Oreg *et al.,* 2011), the focus should be upon the level of *engagement* created through information channels. This would also be a suitable name for a variable when quantitatively investigating the relationship between information and resistance to change.
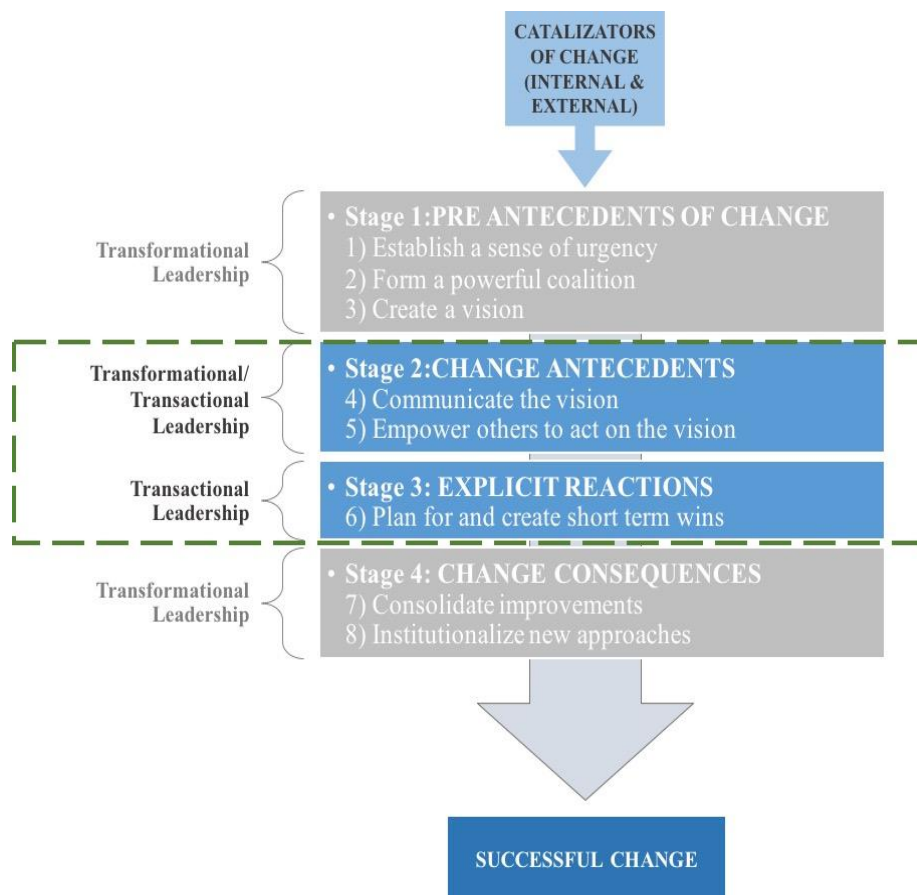
Figure 7: Adaptation of theoretical synthesis model to small changes

7.2 Discussion

7.2.1 Implications

The purpose of this thesis was to contribute to the understanding of the use of different leadership styles throughout the different stages of a change process. This was done by creating a framework that takes into account change agents and change recipients in providing insight to the change process. Our hope is that this can be applied practically on change initiatives and contribute to what makes for effective leadership in overcoming resistance to change.

7.2.2 Limitations

Throughout the research process that has led to the completion of the thesis, we have attempted to control as many variables as possible to increase the validity of the results, however there are certain limitations that should be taken into account. Related to the collection of data, the interviews constitute an ex-post source of data, which could impact

the opinions and reactions of change actors. Being able to observe the actions and reactions of change actors as they unfolded would have improved the quality of our study, as it relates to reactions during the change process, as opposed to having to rely on reactions after the fact. However, the specific change initiative investigated was one executed over a brief amount of time, and we purposely sought out a case organization where the change had been implemented recently as discussed in part 2.3 Case Selection. This ensured that the change actors would be able remember and retell their reactions in as detailed a manner as possible.

However, the recent implementation of the change, the short time period of the change, and the fact that change agents and recipients delivered very clear and on the whole similar statements indicated to us that the change actors were able to relay clear, sufficient, accurate and generalizable data for making analytical conclusion. This does not however discount the need for more research, qualitative and quantitative, and especially on changes that are of a larger nature, in order to test conclusions and verify the full applicability of the created model. This is related to the potential danger that the findings and the model are not generalizable to other cases.

7.2.3 Suggestions for future research

This thesis began with an acknowledgment that change is a constant in modern day society. Connecting back to this, the need for continued research and understanding of the field remains an important one. In order to test the applicability and relevance of the model, it needs to be tested further in other contexts. Specifically, organizational changes of a larger scope would better allow for testing the full scope (all stages) of the model. Further, future studies are encouraged to test it in other areas than the one our case study organisation falls under (larger departments, public organizations, etc). The need for further research between the interplay of change agents and change recipients, as opposed to focusing solely on one continues to be relevant. Additionally, the intricacies in the regulation of flow of information and its relation to resistance to change to change recipient is also one that bears further scrutiny and investigation.

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