

The importance of internal communication in organizational change: Case study of the structural change in a Belgian government agency.

Ellen Van Praet & Sarah Van Leuven (Ghent University, Belgium)

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In this paper, we present the results of a *mixed method* research assessing change communication in a Belgian governmental institution which recently implemented a change in its organizational structure.

Our approach to the data was twofold. The descriptive, quantitative first part of the research relies on a survey of 718 staff members involved in the change. The survey consists of 30 questions assessing the internal communication about the change, and the staff's willingness to change. The questionnaire is based on existing instruments - such as the ICA audit, the scales of Armenakis et al (2007) and Wanous et al (2000). We addressed the following research questions:

RQ1 - To what extent are staff members willing to go along with the change?

RQ2 - To what extent are staff members satisfied with the internal communication regarding the change?

Second, we conducted 14 semi-structured in-depth interviews with staff members, in which we further explored notable findings of the survey. The interviews (each about 20 to 30 minutes) were conducted in the period from June 25, 2014 to July 9, 2014 and aimed at answering the following research question:

RQ3 - To what extent has the internal communication had an impact on staff members' willingness to change or change resistance ?

The findings of the survey confirm that internal communication is an essential element to create willingness to change in organizations (Elving 2005a, 2005b; Clampitt et al. 2000; Armenakis et al. 2007): a negative assessment of the internal communication correlates with a higher degree of change resistance. Next, the in-depth interviews reveal the extent to which individual self-interest acts are at the root of resistance to change. Departing from this observation, we open up the debate about the role of internal communication in signaling and preventing this from happening.

50-word summary: This paper presents the results of a *mixed method* research assessing change communication in a Belgian governmental institution. It reveals the extent to which individual self-interest acts are at the root of resistance to change and opens up the debate about the role of internal communication in preventing this from happening.

