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CULTIVATING AGILE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE: ADDRESSING RESISTANCE TO CHANGE IN BUREAUCRATIC GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS

THESIS

Michael McLane, Master Sergeant, USAF

AFIT-ENS-MS-18-M-145

**DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
AIR UNIVERSITY**

AIR FORCE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

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ORGANIZATIONS

THESIS

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Master Sergeant, USAF

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RESISTANCE TO CHANGE IN BUREAUCRATIC GOVERNMENT
ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract

Resistance to change is a phenomenon that affects organizations almost universally. All organizations large and small are continuously challenged to adjust, evolve and innovate to gain or maintain competitive advantage and mission effectiveness. Alarmingly high failure rates are reported: 30-70% of change initiatives falling short of their prescribed intent or never attain the desired results.

This research investigates how bureaucratic governmental organizations can address this truth, and how leadership can cultivate a flexible, agile culture that is more adaptable to the demands of constant change. This study uses case study methodology and qualitative research methods aid in the understanding of the nuances within the organizational culture of one such organization.

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Michael McLane

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CULTIVATING AGILE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE: ADDRESSING RESISTANCE TO CHANGE IN BUREAUCRATIC GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS

I. Introduction

General Issue

Organizational change studies claim that up to 70% of change initiatives fail (Beer & Nohria, 2000; Burnes, 2015; Hughes, 2011), yet many leaders fail to take this factor into account when introducing new policy or vision. This high rate of failure is due to many factors in individuals, corporate cultures, and even in change management mechanics. Position power is not sufficient to ensure successful change implementation (Schein, 1996) and the reasons for resistance are as dynamic as the methods targeted individuals use to resist changes to their environments.

The primary focus of this research is to provide change leaders a tailored view of the factors impacting change initiatives in bureaucratic organizational contexts. Governmental organizations are often structured in bureaucratic manner, with a pyramid leadership structure and formal processes for decision making. Leaders of the bureaucratically-structured Air Force Sustainment Center (AFSC) capitalize on efficiency and avoid costly delays when change initiatives move swiftly throughout the organizational levels to the tactical tier. Conversely, benefits can be lost or wasted when changes are met with cultural resistance within the ranks. Leadership expends significant time and effort attempting to overcome resistance to change and build support for change initiatives; proactive management strategies can be employed to expedite this process, but no single strategy ensures success. Change-resistant organizations can be slowed to a halt

or delayed by redundant parallel processes as members gravitate to local norms or disregard new processes, sometimes to the point of rendering a corporate change objective ineffective (Rechsteiner & Ronning, 2014). Air Force Sustainment Center leadership must be capable to efficiently create readiness for change, monitor progress, and apply appropriate strategies to address resistance within the organization.

Resistance to change significantly impedes an organization, and large, bureaucratic organizations find themselves especially susceptible to this phenomenon (Ansoff & McDonnell, 1988). Organizations grow and change more rapidly than ever before, and the speed of evolution continues to accelerate. Leaders must change vectors rapidly and adapt their organizations to shifts in vision, market conditions, or policy; opportunities favor agile organizations, while punishing the stagnant. To add complexity to this situation, the body of knowledge suggests that change initiatives are rarely universally and completely accepted without some level of apprehension or resistance from the populations they target, making change resistance ubiquitous in modern organizations (Piderit, 2000). To make matters even more complicated, "resistance to change" is a definition for a variety of behaviors ranging from rolling of the eyes to overt sabotage of an organizational initiative (Ford & Ford, 2010).

Bureaucratic organizations are categorized by pyramid hierarchy and a high degree of formality in the information flows and decision making power (Spector & Beer, 1990). These organizations often have layers of rules, politics, risk aversion, and stove-piped structures which cultivate numerous types of change resistance throughout the ranks. Conger and Kanungo (1988) posit that bureaucratic organizations embrace formality, stability, and rules that tend to limit decision making autonomy at levels

throughout the organization (Weber, 1924). Bureaucracy is not inherently a good or bad organizational framework (Olsen, 2006), and does not carry a negative connotation within the scope of this research. The manpower, size, and geographic distance that this organization covers would not be as well managed with any other management structure, so studying resistance to organizational change initiatives within this context is appropriate.

The target organization for this study is the Air Force Sustainment Center (AFSC), part of the United States Air Force Materiel Command (AFMC). The Air Force Materiel Command is a very large organization and perfectly fits the model for bureaucratic organizational structure (Weber, 1924). Headquarters AFMC oversees six specialized centers located in eight geographical locations spread throughout the United States. This case study focuses on the AFSC, with its three Depot Repair Complexes, three Air Base Wings, two Supply Chain Wings, and $16 Billion annual spend for its operations and maintenance (O&M). In total, this organization employs over 35,000 military and civilian personnel (Afsc.af.mil, 2012; Moore, 2014). The AFSC, as a bureaucratic military organization, constantly undergoes organizational change to meet its stated mission "to sustain weapon system readiness to generate airpower for America" (Afsc.af.mil, 2012; Davis et al., 2015). Depot Repair Complexes are vast maintenance assembly lines that perform maintenance and overhaul on entire aircraft at programmed intervals. They also conduct modifications, structural maintenance, repainting operations, and various other maintenance activities. Air Force Wings are large organizations, often with thousands of employees that have bureaucratic leadership structures and report to

senior leadership. Wings are arranged operationally, and have independent lines of control and responsibility.

Since at least 2010, the Sustainment Center has engaged in dramatic organizational changes to improve efficiency, flow time, and depot repair performance while reducing maintenance timelines and expense. The center has employed business process reengineering, continuous process improvement, rapid improvement events, and other strategies on the path to the creation of programs such as "The AFSC Way" and the "Art of The Possible" (Davis et al., 2015). All of this organizational change and process improvement has yielded dramatic improvements to speed, quality, safety and cost trends as they conduct their various missions and interact with partner organizations (Moore, 2014).

Problem Statement

The body of research often cites organizational change failure rates of 30%-70% and larger organizations routinely deal with significant resistance that slows change initiatives (Jacobs et al., 2013; Lawrence, 2015; Vakola & Nikolaou, 2005). In fact, research identifies that all change initiatives face some amount of change resistance, varying from insignificant to insurmountable and organizational leadership responds to the resistance using a multitude of strategies (Folger & Skarlicki, 1999; Ford & Ford, 2010; Ford, Ford, & D'Amelio, 2008a). AFSC leaders need a robust management strategy that ensures an agile organizational culture adaptable to change. This research focuses on the factors that serve to increase or decrease resistance at an individual or

organizational level in an attempt to develop an operational strategy with lasting effects of increased organizational agility and support for change.

The research addresses a gap in the literature regarding the unique qualities of organizational change management in large bureaucratic government organizations and the nature of leadership strategies in this context. Using qualitative methods and the analysis of interview transcripts, as well as triangulation from observation and archival documentation (examples of artifact types can be found in Appendix F), the research draws conclusions about the conditions that cultivate agile organizational culture as well as the conditions that support increased resistance, hindering organizational change progression through the levels of a bureaucratic organization. Interviewees with expertise in this environment are uniquely equipped to reflect concepts specific to this organization's success and delays.

Research Focus

The research seeks to uncover the specific management strategies and organizational conditions that contribute to a culture of reduced organizational change resistance. The study is designed to also collect data about management strategies that hinder these goals. By recounting successful change events as well as problematic change events within their organizations, interviewees reflected on the differences in culture or management techniques that contributed to each. With analysis of factors that support or oppose change resistant culture, the research clarifies the main factors that affect change implementation within an organization. Organizational agility is

gained when individual and organizational change resistance is reduced, bringing efficiency to change management initiatives throughout AFSC.

The qualitative approach will allow researchers to also define management strategies and organizational conditions that enable, enforce, or cultivate greater resistance to change initiatives. This information can be used in efforts to reshape these resistance-building conditions for maximum benefit to the organization. Increased awareness of both positive and negative factors will allow leaders to improve current conditions while inoculating against resistance-building conditions in the future. Researchers hope to provide a summary of strategies to employ as well as pitfalls to avoid based on the data collected within this organization.

Research and Investigative Questions

Research Questions

How is change resistance addressed in bureaucratic governmental organizations, and what factors should leaders focus on to create a more agile, flexible workforce in this environment? How can leaders implement change initiatives more efficiently to reduce organizational and individual resistance? What qualities of a change initiative contribute to reduced individual change resistance in the AFSC?

Investigative Questions

-What qualities of a change initiative contribute to increased individual resistance to change in the AFSC?

-What are some signs that a change initiative is being resisted by members of the workforce on an individual or group level?

-What are some signs that a change initiative is being embraced by members of the workforce on an individual or group level?

-What are strategies leaders use to address or overcome the organizational tendency toward resistance?

Methodology

This qualitative empirical study employs a single case study approach to address the complex phenomenon of change resistance in a specific context within the AFSC. An investigation into the nature of successful change implementation through the experiences of members within the organization will provide a unique view into the recent history of the Air Force Sustainment Center. The research focuses on the "how and why" and searched for factors influencing the cultivation of agile organizational culture existing within the Air Force Sustainment Center. In addition to conducting interviews with carefully-selected members of the AFSC, this research considers a wide variety of evidence in the form of documentation, organizational culture-related artifacts and observations of work performance as well as meeting proceedings. This analysis assists in triangulating findings and contributing support for findings.

The study selects the unit of analysis as the organization (AFSC), but will rely on information from individual employees who experienced significant change events first hand, and interacted with members of the organization as the change initiative evolved from initial concept to business practice. These individuals can offer an in-depth view of the real issues at hand as change champions and change resistors maneuvered through the events, the organization worked toward a new normal and stability in the new process. In

the case of failed change initiatives, the study will capture nuances perceived as contributing to increased resistance and possibly even the failure of a change event. This analysis of real-world events reveal subtleties that may be missed if analyzing similar events from another perspective. This research design collects data relevant to the views, behaviors, and strategies used by individuals, small groups, and organizational leaders throughout these events.

Assumptions/Limitations

This study is a single case study, focusing on change management strategies and behaviors in the Air Force Sustainment Center work locations, and will deliver results that are somewhat unique to this organization. Interviews, observations and document analysis will focus on a specific time period from 2010 to present within this organization. The selected interviewees are diverse, representing differing points-of-view and leadership levels to minimize the limitation of focusing on a narrower sample. Findings within this context may not be duplicable in other organizational scenarios or timeframes. Change management practices are personality-dependent, and leaders possess varying levels of skill, experience, or charisma to influence change within their span of control (Beckett et al., 2008; Burnes, 2015; Groves, 2006). This factor also makes results more difficult to replicate in other contexts. The population within the AFSC may not be closely representative of a similar-sized non-military company, or even a similar sized military organization, as organizations have unique cultural elements that differentiate them from others (Schein, 1984). In light of the fact that organizational cultures differ and change over time, the findings of this study can be compared to

findings in other literature to derive similar or transferable techniques to meet the objective of cultivating an agile organizational culture that is more efficient in change initiatives.

Implications

This research increases the knowledge of ways in which this organization navigates organizational change in recent history, and analyzes the factors that expedited or hindered the organizational progress through these efforts. Case study findings inform leadership efforts throughout the tiers of the organizational structure, and provide information for tuning management strategies to the needs of this organization. Leaders of today may direct their organization more efficiently with increased knowledge of these successful strategies from the past, as well as those that hindered progress through change initiatives.

Qualitative methods will allow researchers to focus on subtleties and human attitudes, responses, and perspectives from members across the organization by analyzing experiences of individuals and groups within the AFSC (Kvale, 2007). This analysis will effectively create a ranked order of factors that support as well as hinder the goal of organizational agility. These findings may translate outside of this specific organization to similar organizations within the Air Force, the Department of Defense, Governmental organizations, or others with bureaucratic organizational structures. Providing change managers with an effective short list of concepts to employ, as well as factors to avoid, assist them in navigating future change initiatives by providing a toolbox and expanded knowledge about factors that affect their efforts.

II. Literature Review

Chapter Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to clarify the state of the problem being researched by considering other academic works seeking to answer similar challenges. Change management is a mature body of research, and one can only hope to scratch the surface of the work conducted since the seminal authors began to research the topic. Purposive selection of academic works creates a foundation for this research, and a lens to view the research questions through. Many authors have attempted to understand the nature of change management and the way individuals respond to organizational change, therefore this research draws upon those findings to focus the research more specifically on addressing resistance to change in bureaucratic governmental organizations.

The literature review could not consider every work published on the topic, so exclusions were necessary. A focus on contemporary academic works over the last 40 years assisted in answering the question in a "here and now" perspective, and allowed researcher to view the problem from the perspective of the current state of management practice and technology to some extent. As human motivation changes over time, so have communication, management techniques, and technology. Additionally, care was paid to select works that focused on the appropriate size of organization, the nature of resistance in this environment, or models for smoothing out change initiatives in bureaucratic organizations. While this literature review is not exhaustive, it thoroughly considers different contexts, models, proposed solutions, and perspectives on the matter.

Defining Change Resistance

Resistance to change is one of the most ubiquitous organizational phenomena (Schein, 1996) and must be considered by decision makers regardless of scope or difficulty of the change initiative. Ansoff and McDonnell (1988) define resistance as a multi-faceted phenomenon, which introduces unanticipated delays, costs, and instabilities into the process of strategic change. Other authors define resistance as any conduct that serves to maintain the status quo in the face of pressure to alter the status quo (Zaltman & Duncan, 1977). The concept of maintaining a status quo is important, as humans tend to demonstrate a fear of the unknown or threats that disrupt a comfortable situation. Humans display an intrinsic desire for psychological equilibrium (Osgood & Tannenbaum, 1955). Greater understanding of these realities helps leaders maneuver through change initiatives without viewing resistance as an adversarial force to be overcome.

Defining Change Agility

Organizational change agility is defined the purpose of this case study as an organization's ability to maneuver through changes in a responsive and efficient manner, minimizing disruptions and maintaining performance efficiency during periods of significant (disruptive) changes. The term "change agility" can be used to describe individuals, small groups, or entire organizations. Agile organizations are flexible and adaptable, capturing benefit from efficient changes (Lawler & Boudreau, 2009). Individuals, groups and organizations with higher levels of change agility feel less turbulence from change events and initiatives, and are more capable in responding rapidly to the demands placed on them (McCann, Selsky, & Lee, 2009). Worley &

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Lawler (2010) posit that shared leadership and identity also contribute to organizational agility, spreading knowledge and power throughout the organization. Agile organizations are future focused and can find stability in those strategies that sense and respond to the ever-changing environment in which they operate (Lawler & Boudreau, 2009). An Agile organization can shift from one advantage to another through time to maintain sustained performance over longer periods of time (Worley & Lawler, 2010). Change agility in a bureaucratic organization is not necessarily "natural", but organizations such as the AFSC can gain many benefits when they can maintain this effort over time, and the AFSC does demonstrate many qualities organizational agility with its future focus and constant efforts in the area of Continuous Process Improvement.

Individuals' Needs

Organizations are comprised of individuals and individuals have needs. Maslow (1998) developed a hierarchy of needs which is widely accepted among academics, and the second level represents the need for safety. Organizational changes may deeply disturb an individual's feeling of safety, as the uncertainty of impending change disrupts the comfortable environment free of unknowns. Folger and Skarlicki (1999) posit that organizational change is frequently perceived as a loss to the individual. This loss of comfort or safety may invoke the needs mechanism, causing the individual to resist the uncomfortable change episode in any number of ways. People do not resist change itself, they resist the uncertainties and potential outcomes that changes cause (Waddell & Sohal, 1998).

Strategies to Address Change

Organizational change initiatives are vary on a spectrum from evolutionary to strategic, though real changes are somewhere between the extremes. One survey found that only 22.4% of changes classify as strategic in nature (Pardo De Val & Martinez-Fuentes, 2003). Academics suggest a variety of strategies that can be applied or matched to the numerous types of individual resistance, giving leadership teams a plethora of combinations to consider that the correct strategy would be incredibly hard to discern in a given situation (Dal Cin, Zanna, & Fong, 2004; Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979; Palmer, 2004). Addressing this situation is analogous to a shooter aiming at a moving target, challenging even the most adept change leader.

Organizations trend toward stability by their very nature. Sunk costs, investments, lessons learned, market share, and other factors create a corporate system in which reliability and predictability are rewarded through economic incentives. Resistance is a natural phenomenon in individuals, so it transfers to the corporate cultures and serves a useful role in managing organizations (Waddell & Sohal, 1998). An organizational rhythm is created by countering forces of stability and change, and this balance is important to individuals within the organization. As external factors cause an organization to undergo changes, members of the organization lean toward stability and the firm lies somewhere on a continuum from agile to change resistant. Organizations are constantly maneuvering through time, experiencing small and large changes from evolutionary to revolutionary. The larger changes simply require more inertia and more organizational momentum (Groves, 2006; Hage, 1999). The smaller change initiatives are generally met with less organizational resistance while major initiatives require more

careful implementation. These major initiatives are found to fail an astounding 67%-81%

of cases and they fail almost twice as often due to resistance than to some technical issue

(Hornstein, 2014). If leaders understand the factors that contribute to the varying types of

resistance, they can better apply techniques to mitigate the resistance or prime the

organization for change as necessary (Self & Schraeder, 2009).

Varied Mechanisms of Resistance

Bovey and Hede (2001) observed that much organizational change research

focused on organizational issues rather than human psychological factors which play a

major role in the intention to resist change. Individuals' resistance mechanisms are many,

and can range from ambivalence, cynicism, fear, parochial self-interest,

misunderstanding, disagreement, and insecurity to, lack of self-efficacy, sabotage, and a

multitude of others, leaders cannot possibly sense and solve every resistor's issue

efficiently. Many of the reasons for resistance are extremely internal and easily disguised

by the individuals experiencing them (Beckett et al., 2008; Ford, Ford, & McNamara,

2002; Rieley, 2016). Employees experience changes to their environment in a variety of

different ways, and initial individual resistance manifest from numerous motivations. Just

as the sources of resistance vary, so do the types. Managers are fortunate when

employees voice their resistance, because at least a conversation is initiated on the topic

of change. Some percentage of employees prefers to remain silent about their resistance

to an organizational change, or share information only in the presence of those with

similar opinions – effectively creating groups of dissenters.

Experienced change implementers can address overt resistance directly by building consensus or applying any one of a multitude of strategies, but the covert resistance mechanisms present a unique problem to leadership teams. Many leadership techniques include strategies to proactively manage the covert issues leading up to the introduction of disruptive planned change as a way to address this factor (Carter, 2008; Mitchell, 2013). Leaders of modern bureaucratic organizations often underestimate the number of covert resisters within their span of control, but carefully consider the cause-and-effect nature of management change initiatives and the way employees react to mitigate some change resistance (Rieley, 2016).

Leadership Vision and Future State

Leadership vision and emotional expressivity are highly important to implementation of disruptive change initiatives, as the future vision for the organization can unify efforts and build participation in members of every tier, and analysis is done on the impacts to organizational, group, and individual impacts (Groves, 2006). Strong leadership is thoroughly documented as an important part of leading change, and communication skills become vitally important in large organizations such as this, which do not allow for ongoing face-to-face communication between senior leaders and the population. Leadership attitudes and actions can help or hinder change initiative adoption throughout the organization, and pockets of resistance can be found wherever inadequate leadership support and sponsorship are not present. Indecisive, uncertain, and ambivalent change recipients make up approximately 70% of resisters, and these individuals can greatly benefit from the leadership vision, effective communication and transparency

(Bareil, 2013; Dufour & Steane, 2006). With these factors considered, this study isolates leadership actions and attitudes that demonstrate the presence or absence of leadership vision and communication of that vision throughout the organization as a factor for reducing organizational change resistance.

Leveraging Participation to Reduce Resistance

Employee participation in organizational reform programs cannot be discounted, as the recipients of the change are often in position to make invaluable contributions to meet leadership objectives (Hage, 1999; Lines, 2004). The concept of participation is widely cited as one method to motivate members of the workforce, as it addresses psychological factors such as common purpose, empowerment, and transparency (Gill, 2002; Lawrence, 2015). Involvement in a change process by members from the change target group increases support for the change, as the effort becomes more collaborative and less adversarial. In this situation, the members of the change target group feel valued and trusted to help craft the solution and feelings of injustice, resentment or victimization are greatly reduced (Coghlan, 1993; Ming-Chu & Meng-Hsiu, 2015). Employee participation techniques are challenging in bureaucratic structures, as these organizations are quite large in size. Larger organizations simply cannot include the necessary percentage of employees as participants in the design of every change initiative as a primary method to reduce resistance, so organizational identity and camaraderie are built throughout tiers within the subordinate units. Knowledge of the change initiative, as well as training and participation within the various levels is important to message penetration and inclusion.

The inclusion technique is more easily employed within smaller corporate entities and flattened organizational structures, highlighting a major difference between bureaucratic and flat organizational structure. Some large corporations have overhauled their organizational structure and removed the power distance, effectively flattening a large organization to take advantage of this more agile, adaptive culture (Meirui & Kleiner, 2016; Piderit, 2000). Organizational flattening is a useful tool in redesigning some of the traditional bureaucracy out of modern bureaucratic organizations. In this situation, leaders often allow subordinate units to operate with minimal higher level control, and prefer more collaborative interactions.

Resistance is not necessarily a bad word in organizations, and this study will include concepts such as constructive resistance, devil's advocate argument, contrarian consideration, feedback, and negotiations to consider how an organization navigates the waters of change. Disruptive change upsets the balance of an organization, so there will be communication channels and management techniques that address employee feedback to leadership as a change initiative evolves to maturity. Many people do not resist change specifically, but resist the unsettling feeling of uncertainty that the change brings. At the core of resistance, there exists a two-way conversation where the change target wants to be heard and their opinions considered. Leaders can simply label this as "resistance" or they can choose to maintain lines of communication and satisfy employee needs while collecting inputs and considering other points of view. If this conversation is not dismissed as resistance, it can become an amazing resource for change management and implementation (Coghlan, 1993; Ford & Ford, 2010; Waddell & Sohal, 1998).

Considerations for Bureaucratic Organizations

Bureaucratic organizations often employ a large number of employees, ranging from hundreds to thousands (Olsen, 2006). Each of these individuals may experience episodic changes as well as continuous changes with varying levels of depth or difficulty. These employees perceive each change individually, experiencing many changes at once. The number, difficulty, and uncertainty of these changes contribute to the individuals' perception of their environment in its entirety (Bergström, Styhre, & Thilander, 2014). Individuals approach organizational changes with any range of emotions including enthusiasm, cynicism, ambivalence, fear, anger, or surprise (Piderit, 2000; Qian & Daniels, 2007). This combination of inputs can cause change fatigue in even the most willing change participants, as they constantly adapt to the changes imposed upon them (Rafferty & Griffin, 2006). Yet, corporate decision makers must respond to changing market conditions, fiscal demands and other external factors, so long periods of stability are not possible (Burnes & Jackson, 2011; Coghlan, 1993).

Each organization would have unique nuances to consider when initiating major change implementation, but bureaucratic organizations have certain factors to consider. Organizations of this size are notoriously slow at shifting such a large, diverse culture. The power distance from the lowest pay grades to the top tier of leadership can be helpful or hurtful in message penetration and understanding, depending on how it is leveraged. Every tier of leadership and each geographically-separated work center further complicates the flow of information and individual buy-in that people experience. Where a team of five members speaks in terms of "we", teams of 35,000 members more likely speak in terms of "us and them". Considering this fact while conducting cross-validation

and other research during this case study, significant evidence was found to support the hypothesis that this organizational leadership team completely understands this issue and works diligently to communicate efficiently and make true connection with even the most distant members in pay grade or geographical terms.

Leaders of the AFSC speak in terms of common goals, common threats, and use "we succeed or fail together" types of communications (Davis et al., 2015). Vision statements are carefully crafted to be direct, simple, and all-inclusive. Presentations specifically recognize even the smallest of functional areas by name in highlighting successes that impact their big-picture goals. Commanders travel frequently "to see the people" and understand that education and training sometimes becomes more expensive to implement because of the reach of their organization. Messaging and information are widely distributed, leaving no members or group "in the dark" about major topics of discussion, and points of contact are always listed to directly interact with the team working on the distribution of content. Feedback and interaction are key to the success in this organization, and collaboration is improving all the time. While not perfect, this organization is aware of the nature of bureaucratic organizations, and deliberately postures to minimize those weaknesses.

Bureaucratic Organizations and Change Communication

Leaders underestimate the time, communication, and support employees require to process and make sense of the evolving organizational environment (Beckett et al., 2008; Ford & Ford, 2010). If management teams articulate a compelling vision to inspire their followers, they reduce fear and uncertainty and enhance employees' openness to

change, but this type of communication takes significant time, talent, and effort to deliver. Quality information and communication is key to conveying the need for change (Matos-Marques, Simoes, & Esposito, 2014). To further complicate matters, studies show that in-person communication between change leaders and line-level employees is crucial to effective change management execution (Groves, 2006). Bureaucratic organizations with large numbers of employees may not be able to effectively provide this in-person communication due to chain-of-command and the numerous leadership levels within this type of organizational structure. Yet, when employees receive a clear rationale for change, they more likely feel valued and have lower levels of uncertainty (Qian & Daniels, 2007). Adequate explanation of leadership vision and need for change will alleviate apprehension and reduce uncertainty in members of the organization. However, many organizations do not engage in a systematic method of change management, and may neglect to properly communicate with their employees at all levels (Folger & Skarlicki, 1999). In particular, bureaucratic organizations with numerous tiers of management must put forth significant communicative effort to insure their change management messages have sufficient penetration throughout the organization. Organizations that experience efficient change and reduced organizational resistance most certainly have good communication systems in place to satisfy this need (Anderson, 2002; Bergström, Styhre, & Thilander, 2014b; Waddell & Sohal, 1998).

Pace of Modern Organizational Change

Worley & Mohrman (2014) posit that a new normal exists in organizational management, in stark contrast to the environments of 20 to 30 years ago. There are no

periods of calm between change initiatives to establish equilibrium, and organizations must adapt new change methodology to function in this era of complexity, connectivity, and interdependency (Burnes, 2015; Ford et al., 2002; Talke & Heidenreich, 2014). Organizations cannot maintain competitive advantage without evolving to remain at the forefront of their respective fields. New theories of change refer to seminal works, refining concepts and creating new tools, but tools cannot be copied onto organizations without careful consideration and tailoring (Bovey & Hede, 2001; Griffith-Cooper & King, 2007). New change management tools move from "three-step models" or "four-step processes" to more flexible and dynamic constant feedback loops and unconstrained change models. These models attempt to put more decision-making power into the hands of lower level employees, and reduce the adversarial relationship created in top-down change initiatives by providing visions, goals, and organizational objectives (Cameron & Green, 2012). These models focus on engagement at the individual level to gain involvement throughout the organization. This decentralized approach attempts to create an ongoing change process in which small victories provide rewards and satisfaction to members, and conclusion of change initiatives is not a primary objective. In these models, the vision and sponsorship for change comes from senior leadership, while the solutions and felt need for change originate in lower levels of the organization (Beer et al. 1990).

Summary

The body of literature on change management topics is very robust, and an exhaustive research was not possible, but a solid foundation of related works was

collected and analyzed in preparation for this study. Other works overlay ideas into this research very well, but none could be found that answer the need specifically. Consideration of many works and the concepts within provide a lens to view the current study through as this study delves into the nature of change management and how this organization addresses resistance to change - cultivating organizational agility.

III. Methodology

Chapter Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to define the research questions, discuss the purpose of the research, and explain the approach to answering the research questions within. Additionally, discussion on the techniques and methods used and the strategy for selective sampling of documentation and interviewees will be covered. The single case study and qualitative methods will provide a foundation to collect and analyze the data in an effort to adequately answer the research questions. Interpretive research methodology provides a view into the realities of the case study participants.

Research Design

This research employed a single case study to compile information from subject matter experts from within the focus organization. The emphasis of this case study focuses on change events within the organization and the nuances at play during these events. Individual and organizational change resistance is increased or reduced by various factors within a bureaucratic organization's culture, leadership attitudes and actions, external factors, or even the goals of the change itself. In-depth analysis of experts' stories of change initiatives provided valuable details from their recent involvement with such programs. The case study effectiveness was enhanced through meaningful selective sampling of participants across this diverse organization, experienced in key roles as well as various change events. The diverse selection of experienced personnel optimizes the

researcher's opportunity to identify key factors for cultivating agile culture within bureaucratic organizations.

Data collection for this research is centered on the careful selective sampling of 18 individuals spread across the organization and its close mission partners. Attention was paid to career diversity, experience level, positional variety, as well as representation from several geographical locations. The members selected for participation are seasoned professionals with supervisory through senior leader roles, who have been within the organization at least 5 years. These professionals also have duty positions that deal with change management and organizational management on a daily basis, so they have collectively "seen it all" within the focus of this research.

A thorough review of organizational policies, procedures, and military regulations was performed to supplement the interviews. Cultural documentation such as newsletters and leadership presentations were reviewed. In all, over 30 documents were coded and considered during this triangulation process. Additionally, researchers were involved in formal training in the change initiative content, attended meetings and teleconferences to make participant observations. Participant observations and informal conversations account for 6 additional records that were considered for continuity of leadership themes and change management techniques.

Qualitative methodology is chosen in this research due to some key qualities of such methods and the advantages it offers. Quantitative methods are insufficient to thoroughly investigate phenomena with complex characteristics (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Additionally, Conger and Kanungo (1988) posit that qualitative methods have several advantages over quantitative methods, including:

- More opportunities to explore phenomena in significant depth and to do so longitudinally;

- Flexibility to discern and detect unexpected phenomena during the research;

- Ability to expose rather than impose meanings, emphasizing the variety of situations and milieus rather than overriding them;

- Ability to investigate processes more effectively;

- Greater chances to explore and be sensitive to contextual factors; and

- More effective means to investigate symbolic dimensions.

The use of informal narrative interviews allowed participants to engage in storytelling to convey their understanding and perspective while providing information about the factors pertaining to the current research. This research uses phenomenological methods to understand interviewees' perceptions and perspectives of the change events they chose to share. These narratives provided an inside view of the ways organizational strategies affected the levels of change resistance within the target workforce. Questions were crafted to remind participants to consider their positive and negative organizational change experiences and tell their stories regarding each type of change event. The interviewer's role during the narrative is to encourage the subject to let their story unfold and also assist the subject to structure their stories (Kvale, 2007). Throughout the case study, multiple subjects' stories help to establish organizational norms, factors, and themes that permeate across bureaucratic organizations. Coded excerpts provided a simplified means to find themes that are unique, as well as themes that are consistent across time and varied locations.

Setting

The Air Force Sustainment Center (AFSC) is headquartered at Tinker Air Force Base, Oklahoma. That base is also the home of the Oklahoma City Air Logistics Complex (ALC). In addition to that location, the AFSC enterprise includes Ogden Air Logistics Complex at Hill Air Force Base, Utah as well as the Warner Robins Air Logistics Complex at Robins Air Force Base, Georgia. The AFSC is one of six specialty centers assigned to the Air Force Materiel Command at Wright Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio. The geographic distribution of the Air Logistics Centers provides an opportunity to gather data widely, from multiple sources across the organization. Each of these units has undergone wide-reaching changes affecting the entire enterprise, as well as local changes focused within a single location. This case study is conducted across an organization that provides great diversity in change experiences as well as consistency and common membership in larger initiatives. Participants from different locations may choose to share their experiences with a change initiative from a differing perspective than a colleague at another location, exposing multiple views on similar events.

Interviewee Participant Selection

Interviewees were carefully selected based on a number of factors. Considerations are made for experience within the organization, and across organizational functions. Subjects hold positions in management that drive change and leadership vision throughout the organization, and this tier of leadership is positioned between policymakers and change targets. Their role and unique view of organizational change

management initiatives ensures subjects have an abundance of information to provide through the data collection process.

Ideal candidates for this study have been employed within the organization since the inception of the "AFSC Way" program in 2012 (through the program evolution to "The Art of The Possible"), but interview questions will not ask subjects to discuss these change initiatives specifically or limit which experiences to share (Davis et al., 2015). Interviewees will be encouraged to share their perspectives and observations during change events, but will not be asked questions specifically about which change initiatives they refer to. The lack of restriction of responses was designed to call upon the vast range of experience of each member, and allow respondents to make comparisons between the modern change initiatives to others experienced in the past or in other organizations, highlighting success factors or challenges. This research is focused on social, individual, and organizational factors that affected change resistance levels, and does not seek to collect data regarding any particular change initiative.

Diversity of experience across the selected members is important, so candidates were chosen from across the geographically separated Air Logistics Centers, and from different squadrons within the Centers. Three members were added from a partner organization outside the AFMC who had experience with the change initiative being studied. Additional members have been chosen from the Programs Office overseeing the implementation and maturity of the organizational change across the entire 35,000 member workforce. Several interviewees were selected based on their status as Art of The Possible change implementers (trained members who facilitate implementation of this program within work centers), from the ranks of Technical Sergeant to GG-13

supervisors, as well as Colonel Squadron Commanders. Members of the Subject Matter Expert (SME) team were selected for their experience in training and mentoring users throughout time and can provide unique perspective on the growth and proliferation of the change initiative over the years. Additionally, the title SME refers to those members who are highly trained and selected to conduct training, mentoring and program implementation as a full-time job. Members from the Developmental Programs team were selected to provide information on the role of human resources and training resources in the institutionalization of this program across the enterprise.

Breadth of experience is important in the selection of interviewees, because reflection on personal experiences will include the nuances of leadership strategy and management tactics used in those scenarios. Junior members of the organization may not have the visibility or education to identify some of the more subtle concepts in play as they recount stories of organizational change events that were successful or problematic. Selectees have a minimum of 10 years of experience in bureaucratic government organizations, but several are seasoned veterans approaching career retirement. Candidates have been within this organizational environment for enough time that they can give interesting accounts from multiple perspectives; change target, change manager, or implementer. They can also speak of situations where they were a change initiative supporter or resister. Candidates of such breadth, when prompted to share their most memorable experiences of successful and problematic change, had thorough and varied memories to recount.

Access to Sites

Researcher gained access to sites through research sponsors and academic affiliation between Air Force Materiel Command/Air Force Sustainment Center, and the Air Force Institute of Technology. Interviewer attended the Art of The Possible Advanced Level Workshop (ALW) at Kirtland Air Force Base, NM to conduct participant observations on training tools, techniques, and methodology. Additionally, program Subject Matter Experts were accessed through recurring teleconferences, email, and in sidebar conversations during ALW training. Travel to sites for research purposes was covered through a research grant provided by sponsors at the Air Force Materiel Command, and some local access to resources around Wright-Patterson Air Force Base was also possible.

The documentation needed to triangulate interview findings is available on Share Point collaborative Art of The Possible web sites (Afmc.af.mil, 2017; Davis et al., 2015), and access to archival documents has been arranged for the purpose of this research. Other training materials, Air Force Regulations, and PowerPoint presentations will be collected by the researcher as needed.

Value of Specific Methodology

Selection of the Air Force Sustainment Center as a single case study methodology was appropriate to gather the data for this research (case study protocol is included in Appendix D). Six sources were available to triangulate and associate findings, and these include documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation, and physical artifacts (Yin, 2009). Qualitative methods and single case

studies are suited to extract data from human experience, attitudes, and perspectives where quantitative methods of analysis would be less efficient (Lawrence, 2000; Mitchell, 2013; Self & Schraeder, 2009; Yin, 2009). Case study methodology is well equipped to test for construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability. The use of multiple sources of evidence and establishment of a chain of evidence ensured construct validity. Internal validity is tested through the use of pattern matching, use of logic models, and consideration of rival explanations. External validity is tested through the use of replication logic in other case studies, drawing parallels to established works, as well as through data collection across geographic locations and multiple functions of the organization. Reliability was insured through the development of a case study database and careful adherence to the case study protocol (Yin, 2009).

This research sought to correlate actions and attitudes to effects on individual and organizational change resistance as well as draw conclusions about the anticipated effects of certain actions on employees' attitudes toward change (Dal Cin et al., 2004; Vakola and Nikolaou, 2005). The research also attempted to apply findings within this organization to similar organizational contexts outside the Air Force Sustainment Center. Thorough analysis of cultural artifacts, documentation, and employee responses to change initiatives will help to determine whether similar conclusions can be drawn across organizational boundaries or if the factors identified are unique to this organization. The use of interpretive research methodology aids in focusing on nuance and subtle findings from the analyzed media to increase understanding on the factors that influence change management strategies and sources of change resistance within this organization.

Analysis of the themes of individual/leadership attitudes and actions, change initiative characteristics, features of the organizational culture, external pressures, change goals, and change results aided in the discovery of dynamics that address individual resistance within the organization.

Data Analysis Procedures

Interview transcripts, field notes, archival documents and cultural artifacts were recorded, transcribed, and coded against a provisional code list to synthesize the information gathered during the data collection period. Coding procedures allow the researcher to uncover patterns and themes within the data and cluster similar findings to determine their relevance to the case study. Summary statistics and simple tallying of responses were conducted to analyze the relative abundance of certain findings. Coding allowed the researchers to contrast and compare responses from one interview to another as well as interview responses against documentation or observational data. The researcher read through the transcripts several times to ensure they are familiar with nuances and themes contained within. If follow-up was necessary, it was attempted during the initial review of the transcripts. The data analysis process also accounted for unexpected responses and outliers by careful recording of uncommon responses as well as the more prolific findings. The six sources of data mentioned earlier create opportunities for triangulation (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Objectivity is maintained through careful assignment of standardized codes to the findings.

The research database was constructed within the software package Dedoose Version 8. The database was constructed to accommodate the range of data collected and

the software tools allowed for filtering, searching and compiling the findings in useful ways. The research database is a separate and orderly compilation of case study findings (Yin, 2009). This collection of data facilitated other analysis or external verification of findings as well as coding appropriateness.

Limitations

Researcher is an active duty military member with experience in change management as an implementer, as well as change target roles within bureaucratic governmental organizations, but has not been employed within the target organization. With 15 years of active duty experience within the military (and similarly structured organizations), some bias is possible. This bias was addressed through the use of interview scripting, case study protocol, and carefully diversified interviewee pool to include a wide range of perspectives. Researcher selected no interviewees with which he had previous interactions (outside the time period of the case study) to avoid prior knowledge or guided answers during interview sessions. Care was taken during the selective sampling of supporting documents to collect a wide array of document types for comparison of concepts covered within the interviews.

Qualitative validity strategies were employed throughout case study as outlined by Creswell (2014). Understanding of the case study was increased through adequate amounts of time spent learning about the target organization, performing participant observations, and conducting interviews. Triangulation is performed through numerous document types across a sampling of time and multiple authors from different geographic locations and leadership levels. Researcher bias was acknowledged, detailed, and

mitigated using the strategies within this section. Finally, peer debriefing was used extensively throughout the study to share progress, findings, and seek advice where appropriate (Creswell, 2014).

This research was limited in scope to meet budgetary limitations as well as personnel and time constraints. The findings on cultivating organizational agility and addressing change resistance within bureaucratic organization may or may not be translatable to other organizations, change programs, or time periods. Whether or not universal factors have been exposed is unclear, additional cross-case analysis and case studies would have to be conducted. Carefully selected interviewees provided the primary findings and data set through their responses. Interviews focused on individuals' experiences and the nuances that they share regarding these change events. Simply put, recollection of events can be prone to bias or perspective and may not perfectly represent reality (Bower, 1981). Change resistance factors are dynamic and ambiguous, but analysis of contributing factors can still be fruitful for these research purposes (Ford & Ford, 2010; Piderit, 2000; Qian & Daniels, 2007).

Triangulation allowed the researcher to uncover themes throughout archival documents dating back to the initial stages of this organizational change, and view the evolution of such documentation over time as the program evolved and spread throughout a larger group of implementers. There is a limitation on collecting data from archives such as this, all available information cannot be reviewed and considered with the time and resources available. As such, a small sample of purposeful (and random) documents were reviewed and coded for themes pertaining to the research. With one researcher assigning codes, inter-rater reliability can be problematic for this study. To address this

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factor, coding schemes were created in a collaborative fashion with advice from other researchers, and a code book of definitions clarified the use of those codes during the process.

Ethical Considerations

Case study research has well-established parameters to account for ethical considerations. Consent to interview is important to the process, and the research will not address the names, units, or duty positions of the interviewees specifically. Identifiable information was omitted from the findings to protect the identity of any personnel interviewed or observed during the study, ensuring anonymity. Transcripts provided data for some basic qualitative data analysis, for a simple review of popularity and ranking of codes. Interviews are conducted from a script with primary questions to encourage storytelling and backup questions to build clarity where necessary. The use of storytelling enabled the interviewee to expound upon their experiences with candor and flexibility, including details as they see fit to address the line of questioning.

Interview questions were crafted to maintain neutrality and not steer attitudes, though questions must specifically ask subjects to reflect on positive as well as negative experiences with change initiatives. This mechanic is built in to avoid biases of the interviewer as well as the interviewee. The researcher understands that the interview process requires trust and fairness, and interviewees must consent without coercion. Collection of factors, attitudes, and perceptions during these positive and negative experiences will provide more diverse and accurate data for analysis.

Steps are taken to gain informed consent from participants, and deception is not used in collecting data for the case study. Privacy and confidentiality are protected through the omission of identifying data. Institutional Review Board policies were adhered to; this factor ensures that members from especially vulnerable groups will not be interviewed. Interview participants will be selected equitably throughout the organization to insure that no groups of people are unfairly included or excluded from the research. Interviewees are reminded that they may terminate the interview at any time and transcripts will be excluded/destroyed (Schein, 1996; Yin, 2009).

Summary

This chapter expanded upon the details of the selected method as well as the procedure for recording and analyzing the data collected. Ethical considerations were addressed as well as limitations and potential bias to the case study. Discussion of process with respect to rigor and reliability was also overviewed as it pertains to the scope of this project. To the researchers' knowledge, this methodology has never been applied to this context within the target organization.

The next chapter will discuss the case study findings and the process of analyzing the interview data as well as findings from the multiple sources of supporting data.

IV. Analysis and Results

Chapter Overview

This chapter will detail the process used to analyze the data collected during the study. The use of coded excerpts provided a unique look at the many interview transcripts and documents selected for analysis. Analysis of all media provided 753 individual passages and selections that became excerpts for code assignments. In all, 2755 code assignments were applied to identify and simplify concepts within the interviews and selected media. A brief discussion of the high and low-use individual themes will give way to a more sophisticated analysis of themes that co-occur in a number of important pairs.

Results are discussed in terms of primary concepts uncovered individually as well as themes that often occurred in concert with other themes. The co-occurrence of pairs of themes together provides a unique perspective and view into the change initiatives recounted by interviewees within this case study. The analysis of rank position of several concepts in relation to others on the list provides insight into the case study findings. Later in this chapter, the original investigative questions are readdressed and answered by the data collected.

Leaders of this organization can review which concepts emerge most often during a semi-structured story-telling style interview where people are encouraged to call upon their most memorable change initiative experiences. Interviewees from different career paths, leadership tiers, duty titles, and geographic locations participated, and their highly diverse perspectives were centralized around certain key concepts. The study took 64

factors into account (case study code book posted in Appendix E.), but these codes were represented in certain proportions, providing a unique picture of this organization's culture.

Sixty codes were identified during the literature review and provisional (deductive coding) coding process, and four additional codes were added to capture additional concepts while the research was conducted or reviewed (inductive coding) (Miles et al., 2014; Saldana, 2013). These individual codes were grouped into parent categories, of which there are six. The use of the six parent codes in groups helped to provide context to the individual codes listed within. The parent code groups consisted of the following: individual attitudes and actions, leadership attitudes and actions, qualities of the organization, qualities of the change goals, external pressures, and data and results. Each of these six parent codes is enhanced through the use of subordinate codes, and anywhere from 6 to 17 subordinate codes provided more specific detail to each of the parent code categories. Figure 1 provides a summary of twenty most highly-cited themes used within the coding process and media analysis. A careful view of the themes and their respective rankings can create a unique picture of the findings within the narrow scope of the research. Analysis of these high-use codes increases understanding of the way this organization's members express their stories of change.
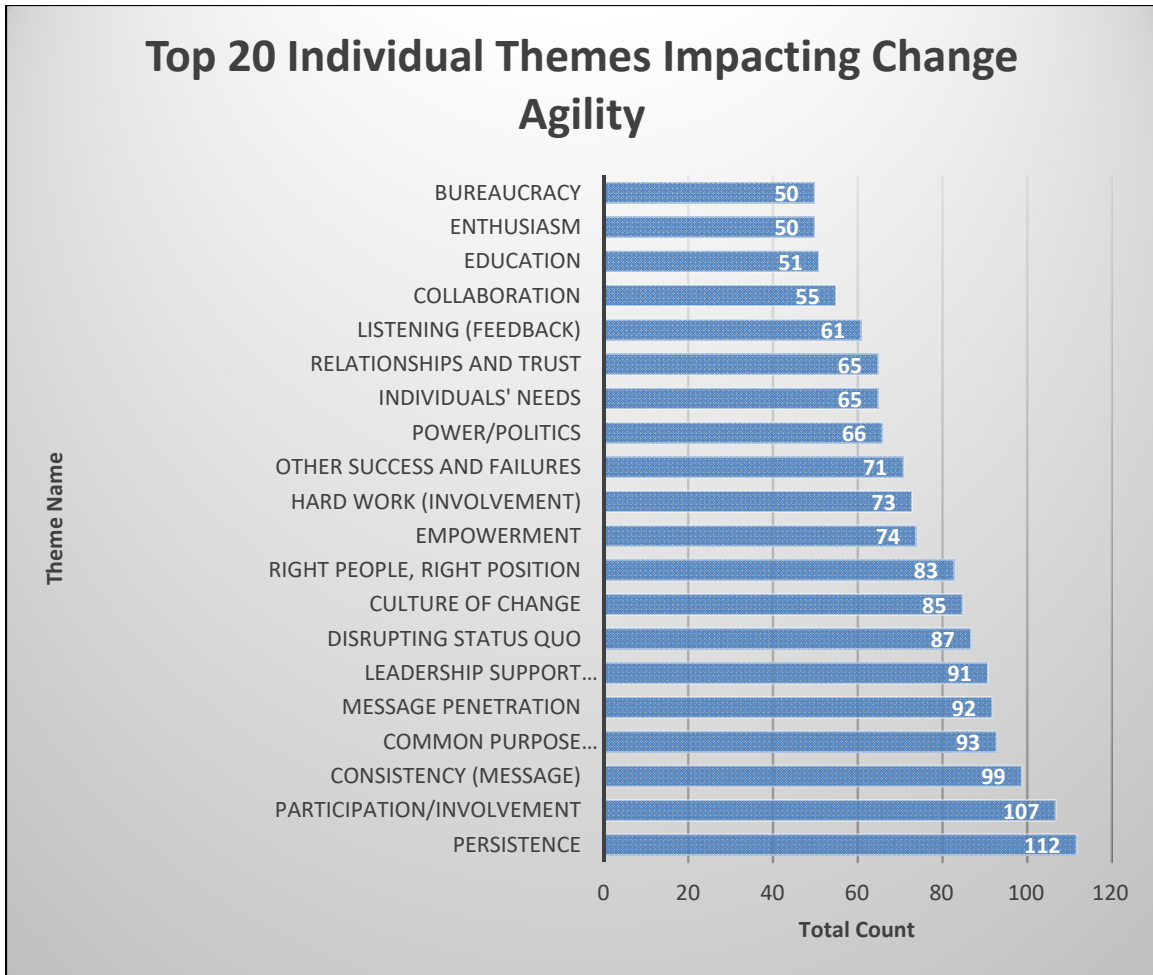
Figure 1. Top Individual Themes Impacting Change Agility

Interviewees spoke of successful organizational changes, problematic change events, and discussed the leading factors that positively or negatively influenced the various scenarios. Keeping these perceptions in mind, mention of a theme such as "organizational consistency of messaging" could either play a positive role or a negative role, depending how an interviewee discussed the concept. This study did not differentiate positive and negative contexts, only the value of that theme to management of change initiatives. Understanding this limitation helps leaders to make use of the data provided. The knowledge that certain themes can highly influence change outcomes and

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workforce impressions of change management strategies helps leaders realize the qualities of a change initiative that remain engrained in members' memories for the duration of their careers, often molding the behaviors of subordinates as they rise to higher levels within the organization. For example, one person shared their early-career experience as a junior enlisted member. He was told to "shut up and color" so many times by a toxic supervisor that he vowed to never behave that way when he became a supervisor. Years later, in tune with his subordinates' ideas, he encourages and empowers them to take ownership of their mission and take pride in their work. This work center "roundtables" everything to brainstorm the best solutions and build common vision and unity of purpose… even when a new management system is thrust upon them, they have the organizational culture to take the change in stride and implement efficiently – the true definition of change agility.

A ranked list of factors can be useful to leaders in understanding the many attributes that take a major, intermediate, or minor role in members' recollections of past change events. Leaders can understand the distribution, and focus their attention on certain concepts as they see fit within their organization. One remark on ranking these themes is that every code contained within the study was used, and none were deleted over the course of data collection or analysis. The lowest-use factor (leadership change paralysis) was utilized only one time over the course of the study.

Interesting perspective can be gained by briefly reviewing the "Bottom 20" lowest-used themes of the 64 total considered within the scope of this case study (application frequency results for all codes posted in appendix B). This selection of themes represents the lowest usage group of the entire list. These were used 24 or fewer

times during analysis of interview transcripts and supporting documentation. Figure 2 highlights the rankings of the low-use codes. Each of these themes were low-use possibly due to various reasons; the military nature of the organization, the line of questioning, or because they are less memorable nuances reviewed by interviewees. Nonetheless, these themes give a short list of factors that are not addressed as frequently within the conversations of successful and problematic change events. The low-use themes are provided in Figure 2 below.
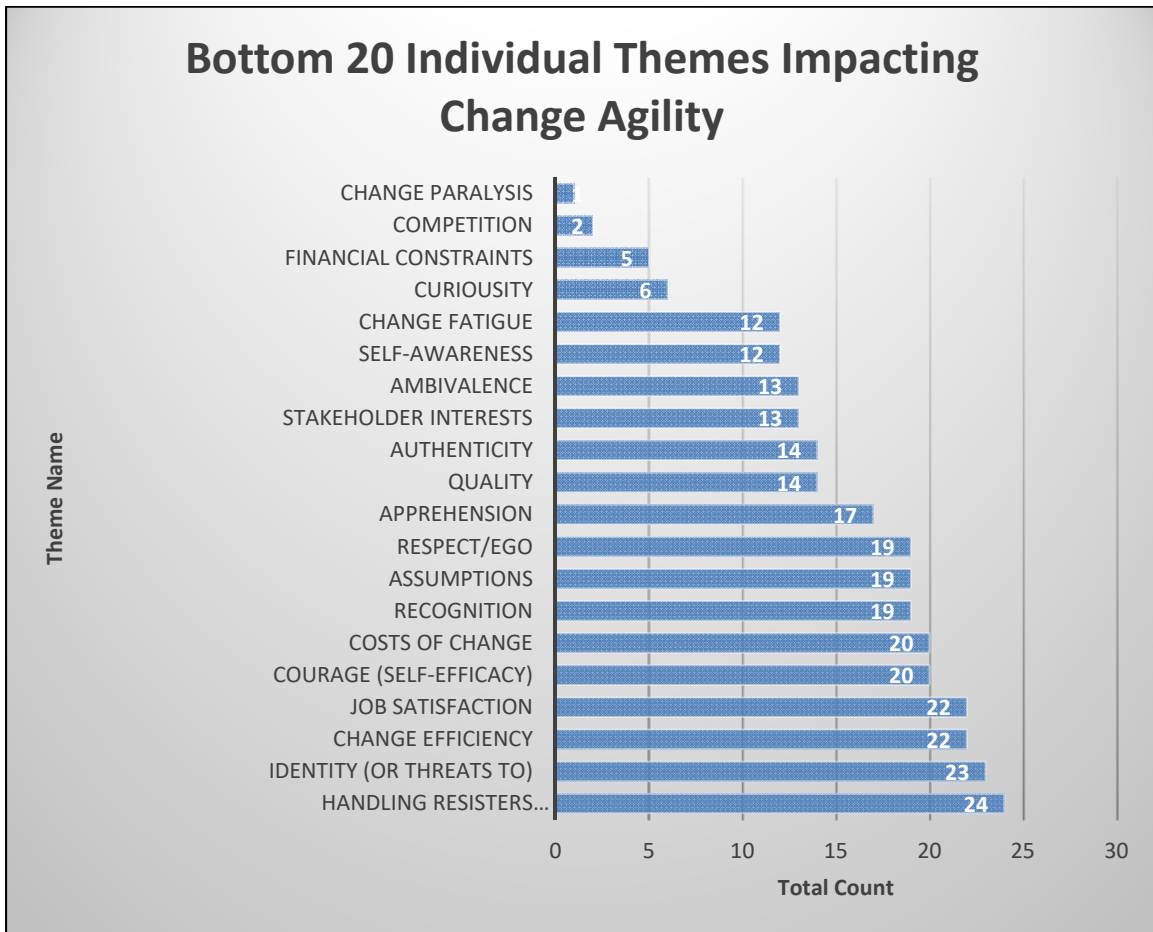
Figure 2. Bottom 20 Individual Themes Impacting Change Agility

An important consideration regarding some very seldom-mentioned factors is that responses may have been primed based on the wording of questions, in that the questions may have inappropriately moved the discussion in a certain direction. A sampling of this last tier shows us that the external pressures of financial constraints and competition were not central to the individuals' discussion of successful and problematic change initiatives. A possible explanation for this is that individuals from the change target perspective may not "feel" these particular pressures, as those external pressures are kept at a higher level of leadership within the organization. Additionally, individual actions and attitudes themes of ambivalence and curiosity also did not come up in discussion nearly as often as some other concepts, and lead us to the assumption that people do not focus on their own curiosity or ambivalence when reflecting on change initiatives from their past.

After completing the assignment of the codes to excerpts, the data was analyzed for the relative frequency of certain concepts, as well as the co-occurrences whenever two or more codes were assigned to the same excerpt. Review of these co-occurrences revealed over 9300 instances where a particular concept combines with another (code co-occurrence raw data is posted in Appendix A). Rather than focusing on singular themes and their ranked position on the list of 64, research focused on the interactions between certain co-occurrences that emerged from the multitude of combinations available. In change management, many factors play a role in the way individuals perceive change and respond, e.g. the organizational climate, leadership behaviors, even the nature of the goal itself can impact the success of the change initiative. With these nuanced interactions in mind, the researcher can delve deeper into the most common theme co-occurrences to

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build an understanding about multiple factors that work together to impact change success or failure.

Results

Analysis of co-occurring themes yielded a large grid with 64 x 64 intersections between the concepts. Taking into account the fact that each concept will only be coded to an excerpt one time, a code intersecting with itself is not possible. The 64x64 grid, excluding 64 impossible correlations leaves 4032 combinations (half of which are cross-product duplicates). Each of these correlations was tallied for popularity, and ordered based on the number of time that particular co-occurrence was used throughout the study (raw data for co-occurrences is posted in Appendix A).

The top 13 list in rank order was selected for closer analysis, and these 13 will be discussed to build some understanding about the organizational change climate and techniques used as it pertains to this research. To select this threshold, the data was reviewed and grouped into sections using "heat mapping" of certain thresholds within the data set. Intersections with tally counts of 15 or fewer were excluded focus on key findings within the data. The remaining co-occurrence counts included those applied in 16 to 27 excerpts. Further analysis of a more inclusive group would be useful, as conclusions could be drawn about combinations that exist in fewer samples or combinations that do not occur at all. Figure 3 provides a visual to better understand the heat-mapping threshold method and the ease of viewing the popularity of co-occurring concepts within a much larger data set. More complete data is available within the appendix.
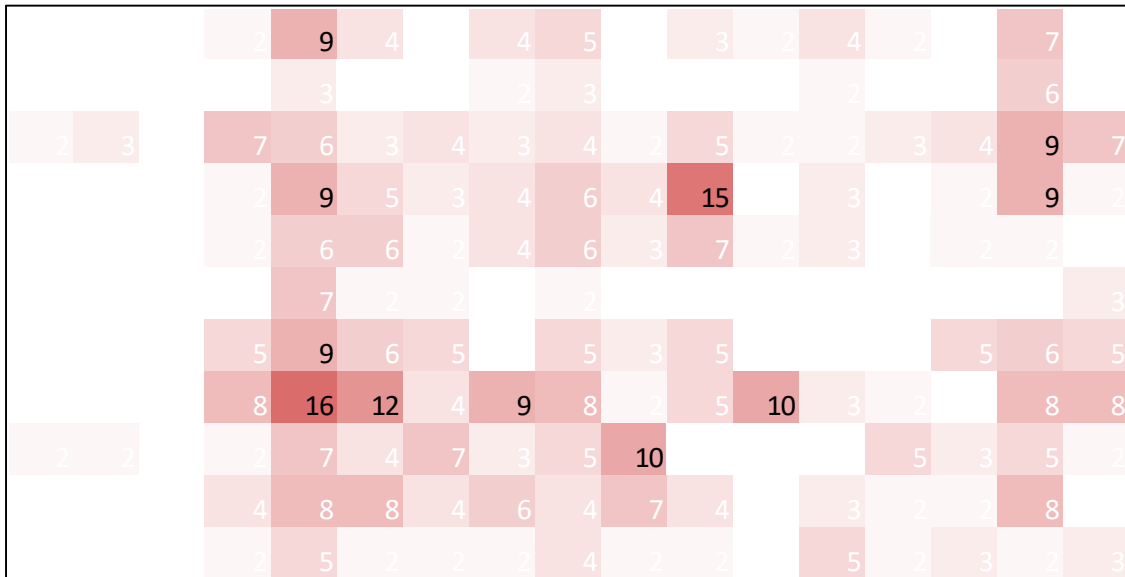
Figure 3. Example of Heat-Mapping Technique

Analysis of Co-Occurrence: Organizational Culture of Change and Consistency of Message

> *"We all speak the same language. We all understand each other when we talk. That's the trick. If you just say I'm going to go into this one little area and I'm going to implement a constraints-based management system, everybody else is doing it different, you'll get a few good results there, but you won't maintain."*

Throughout this study, 27 excerpts included a co-occurrence of "organizational culture of change" and "consistency of message". The fact that these two codes coincide so often should not come as a surprise based on the context of this study. Documentation, participant observation, and interviewee responses indicate the existence of a strong message from leadership that this organization embraces organizational change, and proof is found in the evidence that this change has been under

way for over 5 years. Interviewees explained in depth the ways that leadership conveys a consistent message, and the fact that firm pressure originates from the most senior levels of the organization. In order for the many levels of a bureaucratic organization to have a consistency in their messaging, the message must be clear, direct, and conveyed through the senior tiers of leadership to the lower levels of the organization.

A major contributor to the successful message penetration of this change implementation comes from a careful, deliberate marketing approach. Not only does this organization utilize technology to distribute information on web pages, but they employ tri-fold brochures, visual aids, graphs and charts within the work center, as well as posters, banners, and persistent displays of work center performance within the common areas of each work center. The documentation selected for triangulation of this concept also proved to be full of visual aids, concept models, consistent style design and coloration. Analysis of earlier documentation showed a much rougher approach, where the presentations were not as refined and streamlined. As the years progress, the sampled visual aids become more consistent, easier to interpret, and memorable.

In an organization of ~35,000 people, training poses a significant challenge. Statistics from the training team reveal that only a few hundred people attend formal program training seminars for the change initiative each year. The small number of trainees educated, combined with regular turnover in a military organization, paints a picture that formal education on the change initiative has only penetrated a small percentage of the total. Where other organizations may a shortcut this process by forcing a mandatory slideshow upon a population of people, the researcher observed this implementation team's approach to be more deliberate and patient. Even though formal

education has not been widely applied, this organization has excellent message penetration due to the involvement of leadership and the many methods of message delivery. During interviews, one concept that was revisited regularly was the fact that formal education can become quite costly in terms of man hours, time away from a work center, and travel dollars. Consideration that formal education can be costly sets it as a resource that this already financially constrained organization needs to distribute carefully. The careful distribution of education is further evidenced by the creation of four training levels, though not all have been widely implemented yet. The invention of four tiers of training is an effort to distribute targeted training as needed by each level of leadership, and control flow and appropriateness of this resource. One conclusion that can be made from these observations is that an organizational culture of change does not depend strictly on formal education of the change initiative, but relies more heavily on the quality of message penetration throughout the organization by leadership and socialization. This observation is evidenced by the fact that a relatively low percentage of the population is formally trained in this change initiative, proportional to the number of people actually practicing and involved in the change.

Analysis of Co-Occurrence: Message Penetration and Consistency of Message

> *"We started gaining momentum and adding to that. That's when we started using our public affairs office. They started writing success stories and articles that they published in the paper and online to, again, keep it in the forefront of the mind and to show that it's not just words; we have some success stories to back this up."*

To further expand upon the concept of "message penetration", analysis demonstrates heavy citation of the combination "message penetration" and "consistency

of message" was discovered 26 times throughout the collected data. The idea that message consistency and message penetration go hand-in-hand is not a novel one, considering that they are so often mentioned together lends support to the idea that this organization puts significant focus on change messaging throughout the immense bureaucratic structure. Supporting documentation chosen for analysis supported a clear and consistent message throughout time. The needs for change within the program of choice were always consistently worded, with simple, direct and powerful phrases. There was a noted lack of complexity to these overarching directives, making it very simple for members of this organization to understand and remember the change objectives. The simple statement that this program is the way the AFSC conducts business sets a tone for participation that permeates the organization. In an organization such as this where change is underway constantly, and sustains over several years of time, a strong simple message is good… but consistency seems to be more powerful.

One notable phrase, delivered jokingly, is the quote "a change to the change to the change." This phrase captures a concept that is very real within many bureaucratic organizations, where the message itself is always evolving. This environment basically creates a moving target for the willing members of the organization to try to hit. The moving target also creates an excuse or justification to those who prefer to resist change. Whereas subordinates in an organization act more tactically and respond to leadership directive, leaders make strategic or operational changes to directives all too often. The tenets of the current change implementation program are very much ever-present and preserved. Though the means to the same end do evolve through time, members of the organization cite a certain consistency in the overall goals of this organization's

leadership team. The consistency of this leadership team's messaging is a strong contributor to the very successful message penetration throughout this large, geographically distributed organization.

Analysis of Co-Occurrence: Change Goal Persistence and Consistency of Message

> *"I think magnifying that is the fact that we have rotating leadership. Whether you think it's a good thing or not, our military, who are at the heads of most all of our organizations, they're here and then gone in a couple of years. There are some valuable things about that, and there are some problematic things about that. One of those problematic things, in my mind, is consistency of purpose and a way forward. "*

Co-occurrence of "consistency of message" and "change goal persistence" was found in 22 different instances during the coding and analysis process, providing additional insight into the importance of message consistency. In general terms, organizational change often fails because of a lack of persistent engagement over time. If a change is abandoned before it is adopted as cultural norm, regression to the old process occurs. Seminal authors on change management discuss this concept in such terms as "don't let up" or "make change stick" or "refreezing" (Carter, 2008; Schein, 1996; Vakola & Nikolaou, 2005). The central idea here is that a change initiative must have the stamina to outlast the early disruption it causes in order to achieve the benefits it sets out to achieve. Change initiatives that lose traction often become failures.

In this case study, persistence comes from many levels of the organization staying engaged to the common purpose. Not only does persistence depend on clear, bold statements by senior leaders, but there must be a pressure to adopt that carries through many layers of a large organization. That constant pressure comes from unwavering leadership, and manifests itself as persistence in a goal or a vision. Interviewees coined

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the term "center of gravity" to describe the leadership role in these change initiatives. In relating the leadership role to a concept as unwavering as gravity, interviewees provide a valuable perspective on the importance of that factor in persistence through time.

Another important note regarding this co-occurrence is that "consistency of message" is categorized within the parent code "qualities of the organization," while "change goal persistence" belongs to the "qualities of the change goal" parent code. This highlights the fact that organizational qualities and change initiative qualities may work together to create more positive effects than each could produce independently. The dependence of one factor on another only makes the task of change management in bureaucratic organizations that much more challenging.

Analysis of Co-Occurrence: Change Goal Persistence and Organizational Culture of Change

> *"… the leadership at that complex not only talks the language, but goes out and verifies the work is being done, and by doing this they show the workforce that they are really engaged with the change. The senior leadership at this location has blocked an hour every Tuesday morning, and they go out and observe and participate in a wall walk, which is a visual management technique we are using. That gets them out into the workforce demonstrating that they are truly interested in this program and what it is accomplishing, instead of just talking about it in staff meetings."*

The codes "change goal persistence" and "organizational culture of change" were found to co-occur 22 times as well, creating a tie for third place. Further support for the importance of this cluster of codes is demonstrated in in the use of two previously used codes in a different combination to illuminate the importance of goal persistence on the organizational culture. In any change or technology adoption, participation takes time. Technology adoption curves, diffusion of innovation curves, and change adoption

timelines all paint a similar picture of early adopters paving the way for others to follow as the stages progress (Robinson, 2009; Rogers, 1995). The fact that changes take time to permeate through an organization is well accepted, and the wide adoption by the workforce is necessary for success.

To say that change goal persistence contributes to organizational culture change is not much of a stretch, considering that change takes time and persistence is a way of defining stability, steadiness, or continuity. Persistence of change goals enables progress over time, and time is necessary for the adoption curve to run its course as the early adopters lead the majority into the initiative. Organizations experiencing major change initiatives eventually reach a tipping point where change success becomes more likely as the new cultural norms are widely adopted.

Thus far, analysis of the findings has covered the top four co-occurrences, which have all been made from multiple combinations of the same four factors. Organizational culture of change, change goal consistency, message penetration, and persistence become a core to build upon for the next series of combinations. It is likely that each of these is vitally important to the success this organization has realized over the past several years implementing this change initiative.

Analysis of Co-Occurrence: Change Goal Persistence and Other Successes and Failures

> *"We have undergone two or three different changes. We had an initial change where we learn a few things that worked out well, and a few things that didn't - so we readjusted and went from there. We are on our third change now of that process and we were able to get our overall timeline (pending no outside delays) from 18 to a 10 or 11 day process..."*

The combination of "change goal persistence" with "other successes and failures" was found 21 times within the analysis of this data. "Other successes and failures" is a code that refers to the organizational ability to leverage history as a tool for momentum and motivation for a new objective. An assumption of this case study is that "learning" organizations will use past mistakes as well as successes to frame their objectives for the future state. When goals are stated within a context that highlights past success and failure, it can become more real and palatable for members of the organization that lived through those events.

Leaders who talk in terms of past success can rally and excite an audience, just as those that speak in terms of past failures can acknowledge and take responsibility for imperfect policy. Both of these concepts build workers' confidence in a leadership team, and members are more willing to continue on the adventure given the considerations of past successes and failures. The perspectives of past initiatives also serve to reduce the feeling of uncertainty in subordinates. Quite easily, leaders speak in terms of "we will also conquer this together" and "we are better for our mutual struggles as a team" and spin previous failures into motivation for taking on the next challenge (Ford & Ford, 2010; Self & Schraeder, 2009). The important concept in this code is that the organization embraces its identity and durability through success and failure and uses the past in an appropriate manner when institutionalizing the current change objectives. The power of the past disappears if it is not addressed and used as a frame for the future. Even members who are newer to an organization can benefit from understanding the organizational identity and their role within it (Hornstein, 2012; Piderit, 2000).

Analysis of excerpts with this combination of factors reveals the importance that previous success and failure has in creating a clear, bold change goal that people can understand, given their perspective on the organizational past. Also of note, the concept of past successes and failures can be used at different subordinate levels throughout an organization. Small teams can speak locally of experiences that have gone well or poorly for them in the past as a way to unify their efforts, just as the most senior leaders in the organization can speak about broad organizational successes and shortfalls in addressing their perspective of the future. Persistent change goals, when combined with organizational context given past successes and failures, support reduced change resistance in a bureaucratic governmental organization. This combination of factors paints a picture that "we are still here and still working together for the future."

Analysis of Co-Occurrence: Change Goal Persistence and Change Goal Evolution and Revolution

> *"The commander doesn't need to come in and change the monitoring system*
> *of the nuclear reactor to be able to change the way the business is done day to*
> *day in the nuclear power plant. You still need to know the health and the*
> *status of that primary process, which is the nuclear reaction, but you don't*
> *have to change the monitoring system, put in new dials and new displays and*
> *all that, just because you take over the organization."*

Twenty excerpts contained the concepts of "change goal persistence" and "change goal evolution or revolution." Interviewees frequently mentioned the difference between very large revolutionary change and smaller evolutionary changes within their organizations. Revolutionary changes can be major; they are often well supported, well-publicized, and disruptive to organizations. Revolutionary changes also have to be used carefully by leadership because they can cause a certain amount of change fatigue and

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turbulence within the organization. Interviewees discussed the use of cycles of major changes followed by minor changes to create a more persistent picture of ongoing evolution that is less disruptive than constant revolutionary changes. The initial command directive to institute a wide policy change would have been very revolutionary and disruptive; it would then cause waves within the lower tiers of the organization as they respond by instituting major and minor change initiatives to comply with the directive.

A change goal can be perceived as more persistent by the change targets within the organization if they can view it more as an evolution of business practices rather than a major disruption to the way they do business (Dufour & Steane, 2006; Hage, 1999). Several interviewees highlighted the disruptive impacts of the initial waves of major change within their organization, as well as the fact that normal production numbers decrease for a period of time before they were able to start capitalizing on efficiencies. Evolutionary changes or small "tweaks" do not normally warrant this much conversation, and generally do not cause significant impact to production in a negative sense; however, constant evolutionary shifts in business practices can also create a change fatigue in members where they never feel that they have mastered one new process before being directed into the next change.

Within the context of this study it is important to identify change evolutions and revolutions, and to ensure that they are used effectively. Both evolutionary changes and revolutionary changes can potentially be overused, causing change fatigue over time within a workforce population. Revolutionary changes naturally make way for those evolutions that come about as a by-product, and the evolutionary change helps an organization to stabilize after major change initiatives. In order to ensure a feeling of

change goal persistence within an organization, leaders should remain aware of the magnitude of changes they impose upon the subordinates. Leaders cycle major changes with minor ones to move the organization as required toward a persistent goal.

Analysis of Co-Occurrences: Leadership Support and Engagement with Three Factors: Empowerment, Disrupting Status Quo, and Involvement (Hard Work)

The concept of "leadership support and engagement" was discovered in concert with three other themes, each combination cited 18 times throughout the study. The concept of "leadership support and engagement" was most often paired with "empowerment," "disrupting status quo," and "leadership involvement (hard work)" out of the 63 possible factors it could have paired with. These three co-occurrences create a three-way tie in the middle of this list of 13 pairs.

Leadership support and engagement was coded when a subordinate recounted an example of obvious visible and active, engaged support from a leader. This is not to be confused with simply approving a policy or passively supporting the work of others. Within this study, this code was utilized most often when interviewees recounted specific situations when charismatic leaders took a firm position on a policy, and showed ongoing engagement over a period of time. Any examples of passive support were not coded in this manner, as this code was reserved for extraordinary levels of support.

> *"Because we had AOP done in our division, our directorate and division leadership were bought in. We internally had a conversation about priority and resource management, and we decided to dedicate resources to the [project]…*

Whenever "leadership support and engagement" was paired with "individual attitudes and actions of empowerment," findings demonstrate a dramatic positive impact on employee feelings of empowerment, when interviewees explain the impacts that leadership support can have on individual attitudes and courage to step into the unknown with reduced resistance and consternation. Conversely, lack of leadership support and engagement would not empower the same behavior in a workforce. The support of local leadership, as well as top tiers of leadership, is very important to starting the momentum of change within an organization. Generally, as people become more comfortable with a process they do not rely on the obvious engagement and support of their leadership as they are in the early stages.

> *"He attended a senior leader course with Art of the Possible. I don't think he was very happy with it, so he tasked us to create a workshop. He wanted to see itineraries and attendance lists. He wanted slides. He really wanted this professional product. He said, "I will give you a slot, and you hire somebody to do that.""*

Interviewees often spoke of their leadership support and engagement in terms of a disruption in status quo. This "out with the old, in with the new" concept supports change implementation when a leadership team is willing to throw away an old process and create a fresh situation in which the workforce to operates in. Some respondents also spoke in terms a lack of proper disruption, wherein change becomes nothing more than "additional work" for already busy people. In this context it's clear to see that any major change implementation should be accompanied by a clear and decisive transition from the old process to the new system. Not only does this clear shift give more time and focus to the workforce, but it also demonstrates a willingness of leadership to commit to the new system. Respondents provided examples such as dramatic rearrangement of the work

center physical layout to show commitment to new processes, as well as abandoning old metrics which supposedly appeared no longer important in the new monitoring of process controls. In both instances, evidence reveals a calculated demonstration of abandoning the old system in favor of the new, and the commitment by leadership to operate with the new process in place.

> *"When you look at the leadership model, the very top arc of the leadership model says, "Leadership culture, creating the environment for success." The leader is absolutely critical… you cannot be successful at implementing AOP from the bottom up. It will not work. It gets crushed before it really makes any progress. It has to be leader-driven from the highest level you can find, downward."*

The code "leadership involvement (hard work)" was created and reserved for situations when subordinates viewed their leader working very hard, putting in hours in the work center engaged with the people. They were described as a "force of nature" or "center of gravity", and were a present and available member of the team. Assignment of this code carries an essence of role modeling, demonstration, and perspiration. It is no wonder that this concept decreases workers' resistance to a change initiative. This code is not always reserved for top tiers of leadership, and the effect is similar when middle managers are viewed as highly engaged with a change initiative. To effectively reduce change resistance in an organization, leadership support and engagement must not be passive, just as leadership involvement cannot be passive. In the passages where this co-occurrence was identified, stories were told of legendary leaders who were "down on the shop floor," engaged with the workers, understanding the situation and becoming knowledgeable on all of the processes. They were there listening to the complaints and learning the true obstacles in play within their work centers. Stories were recounted that

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showed tremendous personal commitment, ownership and emotion to institute a change where highly memorable impressions were left upon the subordinates viewing the behavior. The combination of these factors combine to create a form of relentless leadership that is important to change implementation.

Analysis of Co-Occurrences: Organizational Culture of Change with Individual Participation and Involvement and Organizational Socialization and Common Purpose

> *"Part of the ideas we've been talking about with the wall walks is to get everybody involved, to get everybody seeing what the threats are and what the bottlenecks are, and to let them participate in making things better for their team. It's much more of a participatory management tool as well as a visual management tool."*

The two critical co-occurrences are "organizational culture of change" pairs, where the first is combined with "individual participation and involvement" and the other is paired with "organizational socialization and common purpose." When "organizational culture of change" is found in conjunction with "individual participation and involvement", the stories have an essence of "chicken and the egg" where it is unclear which support came first. When people feel that their organizational culture is one of flexibility and change their involvement tends to increase, as their self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and locus of control increases. The changes in individuals' behavior are positively correlated with the culture of organizational change. In essence, these two factors begin with some small action, and feed into each other as the cycle progresses, creating more confidence, participation, and culture change over time. An important observation is the importance in starting the cycle; a small change in the amount of

participation and involvement will cause a small change in the organizational culture, clearing the way for further progress. Interviewees recount tales when their involvement was initially weak or coerced, and the organizational climate improved as the culture in their work center became more adjusted to the new processes.

> *"There was some evolution. It was almost like we had evolved to a point that we were ready for that revolutionary change. We'd been armed properly. We had the weapons, but we were all shooting in different directions. We finally got somebody that walked in and said, "You get no choice; you're shooting that way." That was revolutionary for us."*

In the context of this case study, "organizational socialization and common purpose" was coded when a respondent talked about peers teaching peers, and confidence with a new process growing through mutually experiencing a change initiative. There were also instances when leadership was "in the same boat" with the workforce, as well as a story when a neighboring work center was implementing the same disruptive processes. This code was applied at any time a person recounted a story about looking to their left and to their right, seeing others facing the same challenges they were facing. Through membership and common purpose, their support for the change increased and resistance was reduced. Multiple interviewees told a story about their visit to another work center with a more mature change implementation. In these cases, people increased their comprehension and reduced their fears about the unknown - becoming more comfortable with the apprehension they previously faced.

Throughout this case study, many examples cited the use of socialization and common purpose to advance change implementation. The unification of multiple geographically separated work centers to one common management system and one common objective created very powerful effect, and that unification tends to trickle down

to the subordinate units, where previously "silo" organizations now collaborate and compare notes. In one particular example, interviewer found that previously isolated software developers better connected with their counterparts at other geographical locations, creating a working group for best practices and benchmarking. This resource was highly beneficial for all involved, as major production improvements were found across the organization.

The sheer size of a bureaucratic organization ensures that there are many untapped resources at any given time; socialization and common purpose help to make connections across previous barriers to collaborate and cooperate, removing functional silos and sharing ideas. Most importantly within this case study, financially constrained organizations gain these benefits at zero (or minimal) expense. Dollar cost savings as a direct result of this factor is not within the realm of this study; however, those benefits are undoubtedly tremendous. Aside from dollars saved, there are opportunities to discover and share new technologies and solutions. In one case, a particular work center created a process for administrative management methodology that became a benchmarked best practice across the enterprise. Socialization and common purpose helps ensure organizations move away from the stereotypical stove-piped bureaucracy, where groups guard trade secrets and compete for recognition to a place where "we all succeed together".

Analysis of Co-Occurrence: Organizational Power and Politics and Leadership Disruption of Status Quo

> *"When you're trying to establish a new cultural norm, it was like he was*
> *breaking the arm in order to reset it. He was the cast and as long as he was*
> *there it would reset in that new culture. So while he was here he drove that*

change there was a lot of change, it's far from being complete but it's
amazing how much he was able to change the culture in the period of time he
was there."

The last of the highly-cited co-occurrences is "organizational power and politics" in combination with "leadership disruption of status quo." The organizational power & politics code deals with appropriate and inappropriate uses of power, as well as behaviors based in political maneuvering or in self-serving political actions. Respondents shared stories of leaders appropriately using positional power to modify members' behavior and response to change implementation. Unwavering leadership insistence creates a forcing function to begin the change momentum in an organization. Respondents occasionally mentioned politics within the context of "doing what we are told" and "staying out of trouble." Most often, however, this context was discussed in a more positive manner.

Several interviewees shared accounts of times when organizational power and politics were used to upend the stagnation or the boundaries that existed from an archaic system, disrupting a status quo prevented real change from occurring. These stories provided details of bold leaders who took personal political risk to do the right thing or improve the organization. Sometimes, actions as simple as a new leader arriving and taking time building trust with the "Greybeards," who formally or informally lead the organization, rather than barking orders as they enter the building for the first time provides a foundation of change. More often than not, Power and politics was related in a very positive context, as leaders used their position to align multiple work centers or to unblock opportunities for improvement and efficiency. There was more than one story of leadership heroics in which a leader used their position to move the highly influential

resistors to another position, creating a path for organizational change. In these situations, further questioning revealed the strategy of leadership to make these personnel changes a "positive thing" and not harm peoples' careers.

Considering the factors and the situations recounted during the interviewing process, one can conclude that organizational power and politics are largely used in a positive manner to facilitate change implementation and cultural agility within the target organization. Since this co-occurrence of disrupting status quo and power & politics appeared as often as it did, it provides evidence that this factor has played a major role of the success of this organization thus far. Bureaucratic organizations rely upon positional power and political maneuvers to create and implement changes. Very few members make decisions on the policies that steer such an organization. Understanding this concept is important when considering the way that disrupting status quo and implementing change in an organization like this one takes place. In order to truly implement revolutionary change, the full power of senior level leadership must be engaged and visible.

Review of Highly Cited Themes

In the current system of analysis, the top 13 list could potentially yield 13 unique pairs of themes for a total of 26 highly-cited themes. Upon review of the themes used, analysis shows the entire list is made up of combinations of the same 12 concepts.

- (Organizational) Culture of Change: Used in 4 co-occurrences
- (Organizational) Message Consistency: Used in 3 co-occurrences
- (Organizational) Message Penetration: Used in 1 co-occurrence
- (Organizational) Common Purpose / Socialization: Used in 1 co-occurrence

- (Organizational) Power and Politics: Used in 1 co-occurrence
- (Change Goal) Persistence: Used in 4 co-occurrences
- (Change Goal) Other Successes and Failures: Used in 1 co-occurrence
- (Change Goal) Evolution / Revolution: Used in 1 co-occurrences
- (Leadership Attitudes and Actions) Leadership Support / Sponsorship: Used in 3 co-occurrences
- (Leadership Attitudes and Actions) Disrupting Status Quo: Used in 2 co-occurrences
- (Leadership Attitudes and Actions) Involvement / Hard Work: Used in 1 co-occurrence
- (Individual Attitudes and Actions) Participation and Involvement: Used in 2 co-occurrences
- (Individual Attitudes and Actions) empowerment: Used in 2 co-occurrences

In reviewing the collected data, readers can draw conclusions about the relationship of highly-cited themes, and those that fall lower on the ordered list. Upon initial consideration, leaders may want to shift strategies and efforts to match the highest-impact items on these lists, but dramatic adjustments are ill-advised. These single factors and combinations of co-occurring factors are merely the context from which members speak when referencing change events from their history. Leaders can make use of this information to enhance understanding of the themes that impact users' perception of change implementation within this organization.

Investigative Questions Answered

The investigative questions of this study were answered quite thoroughly through the case study process, where respondents shared their stories and recounted their most memorable change events and the nuances at play within them. These carefully-chosen members represent a wealth of knowledge of factors that serve to increase or decrease the organizational change resistance within their examples, but no easy solution for the

challenge of defeating resistance exists. Throughout this study there is evidence that organizations consist of people and people are multi-faceted. Each member of an organization has unique perspective, history, fears, motivators, skills, goals and vision for their future. When considering all of these factors, only a complicated puzzle remains, with no simple solution for instant change adoption. The study describes complicated interactions of several factors that play a role in creating a culture that is agile, demonstrating a pattern of reduced resistance to change.

This organization was studied under the assumption that it has been very successful in implementing a specific change initiative over the last 5+ years and there was no shortage of stories of heroics, victories, and very hard work. Though this organization enjoys consistent progress of change adoption and mission accomplishment, only continued effort will ensure success in the future. Many interviewees discussed the consequences of leadership transitions, loss of momentum, constrained resources, and complacency. They almost universally agreed that there is no chance of true stability and consistency with the constant evolution of technology and the demands placed upon the organization; only an opportunity to become more conditioned to the harsh facts of constant change and improvement. This leads to the question whether cultural agility is anything more than muscle memory or calluses developed in response to the constant demand placed upon the team.

What qualities of a change initiative contribute to reduced individual change resistance in the AFSC?

The research question is well-answered with numerical representations of the qualities that contribute to reduced resistance. The highly-cited individual codes provided previously (Figure 1) gives insight into some core elements that dramatically influence the speed of adoption of a change initiative, though leaders cannot expect to leverage the use of those concepts at the detriment of the others, or any number of factors not identified by this study. Analysis of the data collected during this case study gives a rank order of the top individual themes that influence resistance levels within the organization.

- Change Goal Persistence
- Leadership Participation and Involvement
- Organizational Messaging Consistency
- Individual Common Purpose / Socialization
- Organizational Change Message Penetration
- Leadership Support / Sponsorship
- Leadership Disrupting Status Quo

This short list of factors provides and important insight into the organizational context from the case study and offers some simple focus areas for leadership to concentrate efforts when leading change. As mentioned above, there are many factors to consider when implementing change… but the factors mentioned here have a large impact in reducing change resistance within this organization.

What qualities of a change initiative contribute to increased individual resistance to change in the AFSC?

Individual resistance is increased in many ways, but most of the discussion centered on leadership attitudes and actions that caused lack of confidence or lack of

cohesion at the unit level. Aside from leadership actions, several interviewees discussed constant leadership changes and the shifting of priorities attached to the new leaders. The changing leadership creates a "wait them out" mentality among long-term members of the organization that may hold the same positions for many years, watching leaders come and go (Burnes, 2015; Hardy, 2011; Lawrence, 2015). Over time, the default response by this tribal group to any new initiative is to "resist until it sticks" or "make them work for it," as evidenced by respondents' inputs to this study.

Interviews revealed stories of "because I said so" leaders, disengaged leaders, or leaders that would not accept the inputs from important informal leaders within the organization. Once slighted, the workforce can implement any number of protective measures and resistance methods, effectively unifying against that leader as a common enemy. Some recounted stories on the softer side of motivation principles and discussed individuals' needs and the resistance they can offer when their needs are not being met. The theme "Individual Needs" was cited in many excerpts and accumulated 65 applications during data collection, making it a moderately popular (#14 of 64) when ranked on the entire list. .

To the credit of the change managers, leaders, and implementers of this particular initiative, many interviewees had to delve far into their memories when talking about problematic change initiatives, or chose to discuss some minor event that occurred at a low-level within a work center. It would seem that the modern leadership team has the authenticity, cohesion, vision, and consistency to make this this change successful.

What are some signs that a change initiative is being resisted by members of the workforce on an individual or group level?

Many interviewees were unable to provide highly specific signs or signals that leaders can observe to determine if a change initiative is being resisted, but many stated the fact that if you cannot see the excitement "spreading like wildfire," you probably have some resistance to work through. There was some discussion about withholding information, rumor mills popping up around a work center, and even about blatant regression to the old system. One comical story was told about an influential informal shop leader bringing the team together to rearrange workstations, toolboxes, desks, and equipment positions back to "normal" while the boss was away - only days after the major streamlining process improvement had created a new efficient work center floor plan. His explanation was simply "I couldn't work that way". If a leader sees the work center unifying efforts against the change, there is definitely resistance to the change initiative.

A simple fact in change management is that there is a spectrum of resistance from a simple huff or sigh all the way to direct sabotage, and every person responds to change in a different way (Ford, Ford, & D'Amelio, 2008b). One person may be faced with numerous changes in their life at any one time, and decide to resist only a single one of them. Others will stubbornly most changes automatically, without consideration. People are not universally resistant or universally supportive, but things like leadership support, trust, education and feedback can help change their position on the spectrum. In any change, only a small percentage of the workforce will be highly motivated early adopters. The remaining majority are going to take some time and significant effort.

What are some signs that a change initiative is being embraced by members of the workforce on an individual or group level?

When conditions align, leadership will observe collaboration, idea generation by subordinates, participation, a focus on customer needs, and shifting of attitudes in the members around them. A work center that is engaged and embracing change will solve disagreements in a constructive manner, depending on their common interest to continue working through the disagreements and small details to implement change. Individuals will get emotional occasionally, this is the nature of caring and worrying about some loss or risk to the identity of self or group. People who are defensive are often that way because they feel that there is some legitimate threat to their comfort or ability to do their job well.

What are strategies leaders use to address or overcome the organizational tendency toward resistance?

Most, if not all, individuals seek stability. Organizations, especially bureaucracies, seek stability. With stability comes comfort and the opportunity to refine or improve a situation. A common response to a disruptive change initiative is "why won't they just let me do my job?" Individuals can become "good" at something to the point where any minor change is a major disruption to their muscle memory and comfort level. Just as maintainers prefer their toolboxes in a constant configuration so they do not have to guess the location of a wrench, many workers prefer some consistency. Unfortunately, the longer a person experiences this comfort level, the harder it becomes to institute a change (Bovey & Hede, 2001; Carter, 2008).

Leaders can create this consistency in other ways. Unifying a team against external pressures such as customer needs, personnel cuts, budgetary pressure, or performance measures can cause a unifying of the organization to some higher cause. The findings of this case study showed that the senior leadership shared the "real world" external threats with all members of the organization. Congressional mandates, declining fleet health, backlogs, performance measures, budgetary constraints, and military threats created a felt need for change.

Without the forcing function and felt need to change, many organizations will maintain a comfort level or status quo. Within many organizations, there is a program for "continuous process improvement" but it can often become a passive "bumper sticker" program as time progresses. Organizations with the forcing function will have stretch goals and broad visions to drive constant refinement and improvement (Harraf et.al, 2015; Kelly, 2008; Spector & Beer, 1990). Maintaining this level of motivation requires a high level of organizational effort on the part of leadership teams to define the next goal, timeline, or performance improvement. Leaders with clearly defined, challenging goals will frame the change in terms of external threats (or customer needs) to ensure the felt need for change permeates their workforce. Goal definition of this type makes the threat more uncomfortable than the change process. This "path of least resistance" shift is a strong motivator, but individuals must have that "adapt and overcome" perspective and a team atmosphere to look past the threats to their own comfort level.

Summary

This chapter addressed the results collected by the chosen methodology and expanded on the analysis used to gain additional understanding of the data. Explanation of the system for ranking individual themes for usage frequency during the study was reviewed, as well as the technique for examining theme co-occurrences where the usage counts are notably high. A review of the highly-cited themes was conducted, and each of the notable co-occurrences was explained in significant detail to increase understanding of the underlying concepts that resonate within the case study.

Investigative questions are answered, and a review of these answers helps to understand the overarching challenge addressed by this case study. Using the data collected from coding themes, excerpts from interviews and selections from supporting documentation, conclusions are made about the key concepts at work within this organization. The next chapter will address research conclusions and recommendations for leaders to consider while steering bureaucratic organizations toward a more agile culture, appropriately addressing resistance to change.

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

Chapter Overview

This chapter serves to overview the information gathered by the method used over the course of this study, and to draw some clear conclusions about the findings within the data and observations. The significance of the research is addressed, as well as the target audience that can take action based on the findings of the study. Some recommendations are made about how leaders can utilize this perspective in managing their bureaucratic organizations, or understand the nuances of their smaller subordinate unit in the context of the larger one. Discussion reviews several recommendations for future research, as well as the limitations of the work given the time, personnel, and financial resources devoted to the research.

Conclusions of Research

These findings were generated based on the researcher's interaction with interviewees and participant observations, as well as non-probability samples of organizational historical documents, current and past policy documentation. As such, this qualitative data collection is vulnerable to biases. Researcher biases have been carefully considered and addressed, and findings are corroborated from multiple sources to minimize these impacts throughout the study. This study has effectively collected a wide array of employee perspectives and memorable change experiences over a range of time and career diversity, as well as many cultural samples of management techniques and strategies from sources other than interviews.

It is important to reiterate that this case study was framed within the context of an ongoing major change initiative with over 5 years of success and different levels of momentum and organizational buy-in over time. Interviewees were exceedingly optimistic when comparing this program to others from their past experiences, and could easily expound upon the qualities of less successful change events to contrast with the qualities that make the "AFSC Way" (a.k.a. "Art of The Possible") better through their own lessons learned. The group was quite adept at speaking in terms of the current body of knowledge, major authors, and in collegiate terms, if not academic. This factor supports the idea that change management is well practiced by members of the organization at multiple leadership levels. Quality change implementation occurs purposefully and the effort is evident, as is the talent (and stick-to-itiveness) of this leadership team. This observation is not brought up as a form of flattery, but to echo the fact that institutional change is a constant, steady effort over long durations (Aiken & Keller, 2008; Westover, 2010; Worley & Mohrman, 2014). Most employees within an organization will not be tasked with this level of involvement in change implementation, but the core team must have the resources, unified objectives, and leadership support to dedicate their efforts to the specific goals of the initiative (Ford et al., 2008b; Hage, 1999). Without the foresight and deliberate investment of such resources in this program by senior leadership years ago, this story would certainly be told from a different perspective.

Individual themes were tallied and explored for patterns and certain concepts emerged with more frequency than others. This system of analysis reviewed the 64 individual themes briefly and organized them based on their respective raw counts.

Analysis of individual techniques proved to be useful but limiting, as a straight line comparison of frequency counts does not increase understanding of the interactions between concepts to create synergies within the context of this study.

The primary analysis for this data was conducted using high popularity co-occurrences where two or more themes were mentioned within the same passage or excerpt. Analysis of the co-occurring themes provides perspective regarding the impact of members' change resistance when certain themes are present in the same change scenario. Through this analysis method, 13 co-occurrences emerged with high popularity, and a discussion of each expanded upon the value of factor combinations. The data shows that these combinations have a disproportionate impact on interviewees' perspective of organizational agility, whether the concepts influence change resistance in a positive or a negative context.

During analysis of these co-occurring themes within the data, a central trifecta emerged, and the links between these primary themes are represented in the given model, presented in Figure 4. Central to this model, "change goal persistence", "organizational message consistency" and "organizational culture of change" themes create the primary group. This group of three concepts became the most highly cited during the analysis of co-occurring themes. Each of these primary concepts co-occurs with each other, as well as with six secondary themes - identified in light blue. The secondary theme of "leadership support and sponsorship" was further enhanced with co-occurrences highly cited with three tertiary themes. The only quaternary theme to make the top 13 list is the organizational theme of "power & politics", often cited within this case study in

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combination with "leadership disruption of status quo". Figure 4 below provides the model of co-occurring themes.
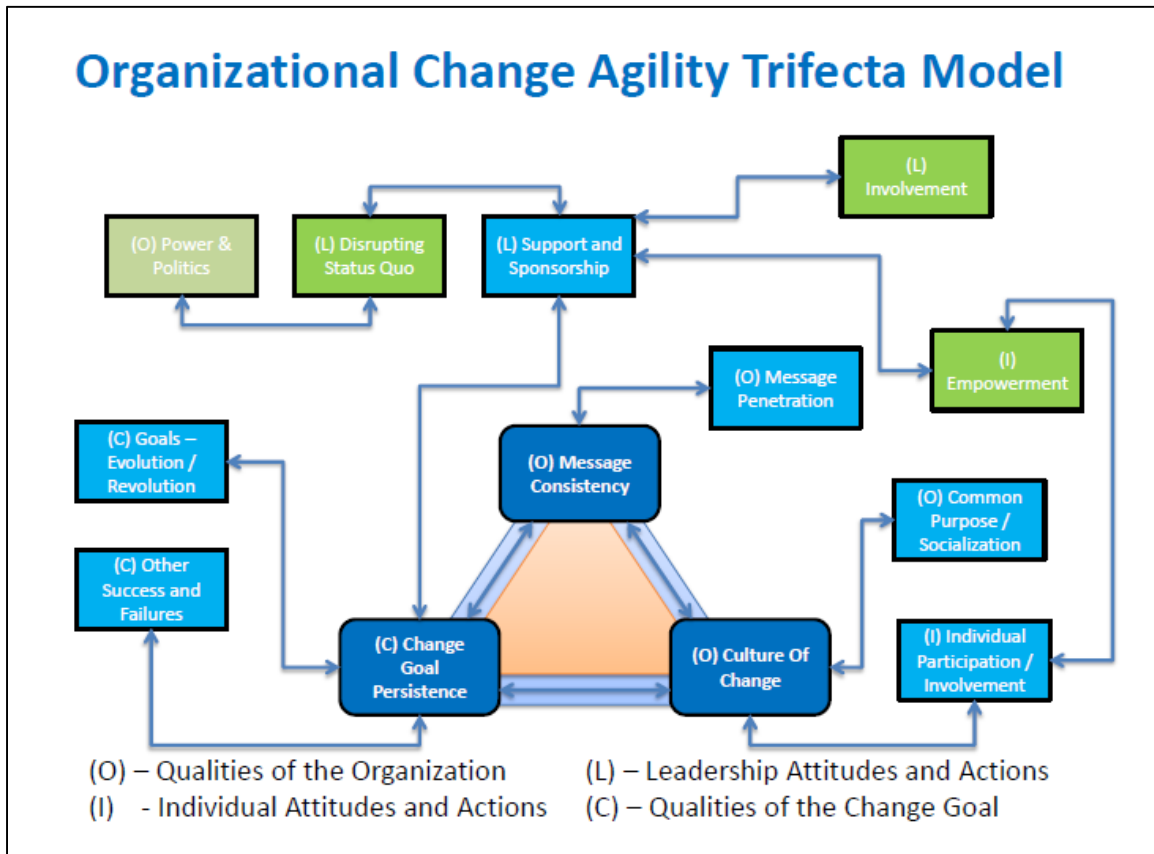
Figure 4. Organizational Change Agility Trifecta Model

Review of this model provides insight into the unique cultural picture within this organization, tailored to the selected sample of interviewees, documents, meetings, conversations, and participant observations. These key concepts are highly important to the nature of the case study findings and the driving factors for this organization's success thus far.

Significance of Research

Leaders and managers of bureaucratic organizations routinely call upon change management techniques to influence change within their organizations, whether they do so consciously or subconsciously. The attitudes and actions of supervisory personnel, as well as the attitudes and actions of the individuals within the organization, create a climate for varying levels of change resistance. As such, change management techniques and challenges are quite universal across organizations, especially those with bureaucratic structures and a significant population of employees, or wide-reaching geographic footprint. Increased understanding of change management principles, especially in this specific organizational context, is very helpful to members attempting to facilitate change agility within their span of control.

This research has allowed a certain level of simplification across many concepts, and reveals a clear popularity for emerging themes when individuals within the organization discuss the memorable factors that influence the quality of certain change initiatives. Additionally, respondents reflected upon problematic change events and compared the inappropriate use of these factors in those situations to the more appropriate use in a successful change implementation. These factors can be simply listed and considered as a foundation of the keys to success within the scope of this study:

- (Organizational) Culture of Change
- (Organizational) Message Consistency
- (Organizational) Common Purpose and Socialization
- (Organizational) Message Penetration
- (Organizational) Power and Politics
- (Change Goals) Persistence

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- (Change Goals) Other Success and Failure
- (Change Goals) Evolution and Revolution
- (Individual Attitudes and Action) Empowerment
- (Individual Attitudes and Action) Participation and Involvement
- (Leadership Attitudes and Action) Support and Sponsorship
- (Leadership Attitudes and Action) Hard Work and Involvement
- (Leadership Attitudes and Action) Disrupting Status Quo

This particular arrangement of concepts is organized for viewing in parent groups, and not in a particular rank order. However, this list represents the essence of the way individuals within the organization view the challenges of change from their expertise and perspective. In an effort to more fully understand this grouping, researcher called upon a few themes measured within the scope of this study that did not earn a key position on the list of themes. These concepts were far lower in rank when the critical characteristics were identified, but they can also provide clarity to the picture of this organization's culture as one considers their lower position on the list.

- (External Pressures) Competition
- (Change Goals) Costs of Change
- (Individual Attitudes and Action) Curiosity
- (Leadership Attitudes and Action) Change Paralysis
- (Data and Results) Recognition
- (Organizational) Handling of Resistance - Personnel Changes

Certainly, information contained in both lists helps when evaluating organizational climate and building a consistent, persistent leadership vision for the members across the enterprise. The importance of lower-ranking themes also enforces the

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point that no factors are dismissed as trivial, only that the value of each can be better understood when ranked amongst the group.

Recommendations for Action

In a review of the case study findings, leaders can clearly see that certain concepts reside at the core of their organizational change management challenge. Interviewees representing a high diversity of career paths, leadership levels, geographical locations, and organizational experiences seem to centralize their conversations around specific key concepts when discussing successful and problematic change events from their history. Taking these findings into account, leaders can craft an organizational strategy and an approach to change management that targets the needs of the members from their organization.

Also provided during this case study is a review of individual concepts (disregarding co-occurrence with other themes) and their rank popularity in relationship to each other (explained while answering the first investigative question). This list can be used in a number of ways, as leaders can understand that certain concepts may not be as impactful as others in changing resistance behaviors in this organizational context. Change agents and implementers at many levels could utilize this information to address the concerns within their span of control. This study did not focus specifically on any tier of leadership, but collected input from a diverse group of experienced leaders from production floor supervision, to administrative program offices, through senior civilian executives.

This model helps to build an understanding of the factors that influence the organizational culture, and the way those factors combine to create synergies which leaders can use in developing a more agile workforce, adaptable to continuous evolutionary and revolutionary changes. Deliberate, persistent messaging significantly reduces disruption in the workforce when leaders execute change initiatives. In addition, individuals will increase participation, feeling more empowered to take on challenges and control their future when certain organizational qualities are present (Henry, 1997; Kelly, 2008; Lawrence, 2000)

A refined, tailored messaging approach, creation of agile organizational culture, and set of leadership tactics shorten the disruptive phase of change implementation, and expedite the change process (Amburgey, Kelly, & Barnett, 1993; Westover, 2010). Quicker adoption of new policies and procedures enables the many tiers of management in this organization to maneuver with greater agility and reduce wasted time and financial resources. Additionally, agile organizations see fewer occurrences of failed change initiatives as their organizational culture becomes better at navigating the process.

All change initiatives cause some amount of organizational disruption (Worley & Mohrman, 2014), but an agile workforce transitions through the stages more efficiently: members resist constructively, maintain participation and involvement, and leadership feedback loops are working to aid in effective communication (Folger & Skarlicki, 1999; Pardo-Del-Val et al., 2003). In an agile organization, ambivalence is minimal and collaboration is high. Leaders take bold actions to disrupt status quo and provide incessant pressure for improvement within the new construct. Continuity of leadership support through many echelons from supervisory ranks to the most senior of leaders is

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vitally important as senior team cohesion provides a foundation for message consistency and organizational momentum (Bareil, 2013; Hartley, Benington, & Binns, 1997).

Organizational culture change is not something that is "done" as an action. Instead, a culture evolves slowly as a result of leadership actions and attitudes driving changes to individual actions and attitudes. External pressures and past results motivate leaders to make choices about the future state of the organization, driving changes to status quo and perpetuating the cycle (Trevis-Certo et al., 2008). Organizational leadership can use the findings of this study to make more informed strategic vector changes and anticipate the needs of their workforce.

Recommendations for Future Research

This case study revealed numerous concepts that were commonly mentioned during interviews and observed in document analysis. Numerical tally of the number of mentions may not be adequate to properly weight the concepts in relation to each other. Second, additional research could be done into other organizations, using similar case study methodology and line of questioning to measure this target organization's success factors against another, uncovering similarities and differences. Third, this research could also be conducted with a more narrow audience of junior level employees or technicians, to isolate factors that influence their change resistance levels, highlighting their perspective. Fourth, survey methodology could be applied to some of the more popular themes within these case study findings, in an attempt to create a weighted score of importance among the concepts. Additionally, the findings of this study could provide a

foundation for a more focused analysis, using a consolidated list of factors and a narrower, refined line of questioning to increase understanding of these concepts' impacts more specifically.

Finally, the concepts discovered over the course of this study were matched and contrasted with findings in other change management literature, and the researcher became familiar with numerous models, as well as the body of research in a general sense. No attempt was made to expand, validate, invalidate or test another model for applicability in this organization. Further research in this organization could consider this strategy, and choose existing models from seminal literature to apply for the benefits of change management strategies. Interview scripts could be designed to carefully test certain concepts from this study or the body of literature.

Summary

This chapter reviewed the conclusions and significance of this research and provided recommendations for further action to be taken based on the findings. Future research opportunities were also considered to enhance or test the findings of this case study. Discussion of individual themes from this study as well as the unique perspective of theme co-occurrence as a method to modeling the relationship of numerous concepts was explored.

A list of case study themes with a high rate of co-occurrence were contrasted against a list of themes found much less often to demonstrate the fact that none of this information can be taken at face value and used in dramatic reformatting of change

implementation strategy. Leaders would be well-served to draw conclusions from the

model, but to also attend to the less-popular factors when steering their organizations

toward a more agile culture. Organizational change management is not a simple task, and

creating a more agile culture is not merely an act of "copy and pasting" a prepackaged

solution - it is a methodical, deliberate approach involving relentless leadership, patience,

and devotion of significant resources.

Appendix A. Code Co-Occurrence Raw Data Table (Partial)

(For entire data set, please contact author)

	Change Efficiency	Data-Driven Goals	Early Victories	Job Satisfaction	Recognition	Systematic Feedback	Backlog/Performance Measures	Competition	Customer Needs	Financial Constraints	Need For Change	Quality	Stakeholder Interests	Ambivalence	Apprehension	Attitudes	Comprehension	Constructive Resistance (engagement)	Courage (self-efficacy)	Curiosity	Education	Empowerment	Enthusiasm	Identity (or threats to)	Individuals' Needs	Participation/Involvement	Self-Awareness	Stakeholder/Ownership
Data/Results																												
Change Efficiency		2	2	3	2	2	2		1		3	1		1		2	3		2	1	6	2	1		1	2	1	3
Data-Driven Goals	2		3	2	5	5	11		6		1	4	1				3				4	6	3		1	6	2	3
Early Victories	2	3		6	4	4	3		2		2					1	2		1		3	2	8		2	4	1	2
Job Satisfaction	3	2	6		3	1	1		1							1			1		3		5		8	1	2	2
Recognition	2	5	4	3		4	1		6		2				1	3	4	2	1			1	5		5	2		4
Systematic Feedback							3				2	3	1					1			3	1	1		2	6		
External Pressures																												
Backlog/Performance Measures	2	11	3	1	1	3		1	10		4	4			3	5	3	1			3	2	2	2	2	5	2	4
Competition							1		1	1																		
Customer Needs	1	6	2	1			10			1	4	5	2		2	2	2	2			2	5	3	2	1	7		1
Financial Constraints								1			1															1		
Need For Change	3	1	2		2	2	4		1	1		4		3	2	3	2	2	1		6	3	1	1	1	7	1	
Quality	1	4			3	3	4		4		5					1	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Stakeholder Interests	1	1	1		1		3		2		1			3	3	3		2	1		2	2	1	1	1	3	1	
Individual Attitudes/Actions																												
Ambivalence		1					3		2		3				1	3	1	1	1		1		2	1	3	5		
Apprehension	1		1				5		2		2			1		1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3		2
Attitudes	2	3	2	1		3	3		2		3	1	3	3	1		1	6	1	3	2	7	5	4	3	13	1	4
Comprehension	3	3		1		4	1		2		1	3		1	1	1		1	1	3	16	3		1	8	16	1	3
Constructive Resistance (engagement)					1	2		1	2					1	2	6	1		1		1	8	2	2	2	12		
Courage (self-efficacy)	2		1			1					1			1	1	1	4	1			8	7	1	1	4	9	2	2
Curiosity	1																3				2				2	2	1	
Education	6	4	3	3			3		2		6	1		1	1	2	16	1	8	2		7	5	2	9	13	1	
Empowerment	2	6	2		1	1	2		5		3	1	1	1	1	7	3	8	7		7		6	1	11	27	1	11
Enthusiasm	1	3	8	5	5	1	2		3		1	1	1	2	1	5		2	1		5	6		1	6	8	2	2
Identity (or threats to)														1	1	4	1	2	1	2	2	1	1		3	1	2	5
Individuals' Needs	1	1	2	8	5	2	2		2	1	1	1	1	3	3	3	8	2	4	2	9	11	6	3		15	2	4
Participation/Involvement	2	6	4	1	2	6	5		7	1	7		3	5	3	13	16	12	9	2	13	27	8	6	15		1	9
Self-Awareness	1	2	1	2			2		1		1	1		1	1	1	1		2	1	1	1	2	1	2	1		
Stakeholder/Ownership	3	3	2	2	4		4		1						2	4	3		2			11	2	5	4	9		

Appendix B. Application Frequency of 64 Themes throughout Case

Parent Category	Theme Name	Applications
The Change Goals	Persistence	112
Individual Attitudes/Actions	Participation/Involvement	107
Organization	Consistency (message)	99
Organization	Common Purpose (Socialization)	93
Organization	Message Penetration	92
Leadership Attitudes/Actions	Leadership Support (Sponsorship)	91
Leadership Attitudes/Actions	Disrupting Status Quo	87
Organization	Culture of Change	85
Organization	Right People, Right Position	83
Individual Attitudes/Actions	Empowerment	74
Leadership Attitudes/Actions	Hard Work (involvement)	73
The Change Goals	Other Success and Failures	71
Organization	Power/Politics	66
Individual Attitudes/Actions	Individuals' Needs	65
Organization	Relationships and Trust	65
Leadership Attitudes/Actions	Listening (Feedback)	61
Organization	Collaboration	55
Individual Attitudes/Actions	Education	51
Individual Attitudes/Actions	Enthusiasm	50
Organization	Bureaucracy	50
Leadership Attitudes/Actions	Senior Team Cohesion (Unity)	47
The Change Goals	Complexity/Magnitude	46
Individual Attitudes/Actions	Attitudes	45
Leadership Attitudes/Actions	Creating a Felt Need For Change	45
Organization	Transparency	45
The Change Goals	Evolution/Revolution	45
The Change Goals	Identifying Key Issues	44
Leadership Attitudes/Actions	Individualized Attention/Approach	43
Leadership Attitudes/Actions	Momentum	43
The Change Goals	Pacing	41
Individual Attitudes/Actions	Stakeholder/Ownership	40
Leadership Attitudes/Actions	Strategic/Compelling Vision	40
Data /Results	Data-Driven Goals	38
External Pressures	Customer Needs	38
Leadership Attitudes/Actions	Leaders Skills/Influence	38
Individual Attitudes/Actions	Comprehension	37
External Pressures	Backlog/Performance Measures	35
Leadership Attitudes/Actions	Resources/Obstacles	34
Data /Results	Systematic Feedback	33
Leadership Attitudes/Actions	Motivation	33
External Pressures	Need For Change	32
Leadership Attitudes/Actions	Role Modeling	32
Individual Attitudes/Actions	Constructive Resistance (engagement)	30
Data /Results	Early Victories	24
Organization	Handling Resisters (Personnel Changes)	24
Individual Attitudes/Actions	Identity (or threats to)	23
Data /Results	Change Efficiency	22
Data /Results	Job Satisfaction	22
Individual Attitudes/Actions	Courage (self-efficacy)	20
The Change Goals	Costs of Change	20
Data /Results	Recognition	19
Leadership Attitudes/Actions	Assumptions	19
Leadership Attitudes/Actions	Respect/Ego	19
Individual Attitudes/Actions	Apprehension	17
External Pressures	Quality	14
Leadership Attitudes/Actions	Authenticity	14
External Pressures	Stakeholder Interests	13
Individual Attitudes/Actions	Ambivalence	13
Individual Attitudes/Actions	Self-Awareness	12
The Change Goals	Change Fatigue	12
Individual Attitudes/Actions	Curiousity	6
External Pressures	Financial Constraints	5
External Pressures	Competition	2
Leadership Attitudes/Actions	Change Paralysis	1

Appendix C. Case Study Interview Script

2017 AFIT Cultivating Agile Organizational Culture: Addressing Resistance to Change in Bureaucratic Government Organizations Interview Script
Icebreaker/Introduction

Name:
Organization/Position:
Year of Experience (in government organizations/in current position):

In this research, we are examining management strategies and responses to varying levels of individual and organizational change resistance as a means to implement change initiatives within bureaucratic governmental organizations. Research identifies that all change initiatives face some amount of change resistance, varying from insignificant to insurmountable and organizational leadership can deal with the resistance using a multitude of strategies.

The body of research often cites organizational change failure rates of 30%-70% and larger organizations routinely deal with significant resistance that slows change initiatives. Our research focuses on the factors that serve to increase or decrease resistance on an individual or organizational level in an attempt to develop an operational strategy with lasting effects of increased organizational agility and support for change.

As a leader in your organization, your experience with change management is invaluable to the current study. We would like to collect some information from your perspective as a change leader, a change target, or a change resistor. Organizational change is not exclusively beneficial, and change resistance is not exclusively harmful, so some of the questions will deal with situations in which resistance was helpful to an organizational change initiative.

Successful Organizational Change Events

1. Please tell me about a situation where an organizational change event went well in your organization and some reasons it was successful.
    a. What leadership strategies or cultural norms had influence?

2. How does your organization constructively deal with change resistance? Have you encountered a time that change resistance was constructive?

3. What are some strategies that leaders use to overcome or harness resistors' energy in a beneficial way? How do leaders motivate or incentivize individuals?

4. What leadership techniques and strategies contribute to a lasting pattern of reduced individual change resistance and ease organizational change transitions? Which certain leadership qualities are critical to successful change management?

Problematic Organizational Change Events

1. Please tell me about a situation where an organizational change event did not go well in your organization and some reasons why.
    a. What are some sources of employee resistance you have observed?
    b. How did leadership adjust strategy in response to the change resistance?

2. Can you describe a situation when an individual with initial reluctance later became a supporter of change or change champion?
    a. How "power and politics" help or hinder change implementation?
    b. How do leaders respond to setbacks or delays in change implementation?

3. Can you describe a situation when a change initiative was proven inappropriate, rescinded by leadership, and damaged credibility? How did leadership address this damage?

4. Can leaders of modern bureaucratic organizations ever expect a period of calm or a feeling of stability between change initiatives?
    a. Do you believe that constant change is a new norm in your organization?

Cultivating Agile Organizational Culture Case Study Protocol (2017)

A. Overview of the case study

Organizational change initiatives can be met with a significant individual or organizational resistance to change forces, and research shows that 30-70% of change initiatives fail. This high rate of failure is due to many factors in individuals, corporate cultures, and even in change management mechanics. Change management literature acknowledges that change initiatives are never universally and completely accepted without some level of apprehension or resistance from the populations they target, making change resistance a constant in modern organizations.

The primary focus of this research is to provide change leaders a tailored view of the factors impacting change initiatives in bureaucratic organizational contexts. Governmental organizations are often structured in bureaucratic manner, with a pyramid leadership structure and formal processes for decision making.

Leadership exhausts significant time and effort attempting to overcome resistance to change and build support for change initiatives; proactive management strategies can be employed to expedite this process, but no single strategy ensures success. Increased understanding of factors that impact change resistance in positive and negative ways will allow AFSC missions to evolve more efficiently, and leaders can avoid change initiative delays and failures experienced in change-resistant organizations.

Problem Statement

Air Force Sustainment Center leadership must be able to efficiently create readiness for change, monitor progress, and apply appropriate strategies to address resistance within the organization. Additionally, leaders must be cognizant of certain organizational factors that increase resistance on an individual or organizational level in order to avoid or reduce the occurrence of these factors.

The target organization for this case study is the Air Force Sustainment Center (AFSC). The AFSC is chosen due to a recent history of dramatic organizational change and evolution. Since 2012, and the start of the "AFSC Way" management innovation, this organization has undergone significant, meaningful change that creates a target-rich environment for change management and resistance-to-change research.

This case study will be conducted as a single case embedded design (Yin, 2014), using interviews with experienced management-level leaders from the three Air Logistics Complexes (ALCs) as well as archival documentation and researcher observations as the embedded units of analysis.

1. Primary research questions of interest:
   a. What qualities of a change initiative contribute to increased / reduced individual change resistance in the AFSC?

   b. What are some signs that a change initiative is being resisted / embraced by members of the workforce on an individual or group level?

2. Analysis of interview transcripts, researcher observations, and archival documentation will be conducted to isolate organizational factors and management practices that affect the level change resistance within this organization. These factors can be compared contrasted to other findings within change management literature to determine unique factors that contribute to organizational agility within the AFSC

3. Key readings are as follows:

B. Data Collection Procedures
   1. Researchers: Lt Col Matthew Douglas; MSgt Michael McLane

   2. Alt POCs: N/A

   3. Data collection plan (See Appendix C for list of documents, interviews, observations)
      The following types of archival documents and visual materials will be collected for analysis: Organizational change guidance documents including "AFSC Way" and "Art of the Possible" literature, SharePoint archival training and meeting minute documentation, briefing and meeting slide decks, training

materials, and informational materials. Researchers may consider other documentation deemed in addressing the research questions.

Face-to-face or telephone interviews will be conducted with experienced change agents, management personnel, and change targets from the three Air Logistics Centers. Other potential interviewees may be identified in the field. Interviewees will provide informed consent. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed for analysis purposes, and information from interviews will be aggregated and kept confidential.

Researcher will also document field notes to record observations; informal discussions; participation in training events, meetings, and briefings; and any information pursuant to the research questions

4. Preparation prior to fieldwork - researchers will review and discuss the following prior to fieldwork: research proposal; case study protocol; key readings; key briefings and archival documents; and interview protocols. Researchers will establish contact with designated POC at each ALC to setup initial orientation, meeting attendance, interviews, and leadership outbrief.

C. **Data Collection Questions** (to guide researcher efforts and avoid mission creep; these are not interview questions)

1. Organizational conditions
    a. Which organizational conditions or cultural norms reduce individual change resistance?
    b. Which organizational conditions or cultural norms increase individual change resistance?

2. Leadership actions and strategies
    a. Which leadership actions or strategies reduce individual or group resistance to change?
    b. Which leadership actions or strategies increase individual or group resistance to change?

3. Types of resistance
    a. Were certain types of resistance more predictable or routinely encountered?
    b. Did leadership bend, negotiate, or change strategy in response to felt resistance to change? What were the signals and results?

4. Types of change

      a. Did episodic or continuous change initiatives face more resistance? Which type is more disruptive to individuals?

      b. Did leadership approach different types of change initiatives with different strategies, or does one system of change management work for all scenarios?

5. Delays, costs, inefficiencies or instabilities

      a. Can members estimate, sense, or identify the cost to their organization caused by organizational resistance?

      b. What strategies do leaders employ to overcome delays, costs, or inefficiencies?

6. Individual needs and motivation

      a. What do change targets need to maintain individual and organizational agility?

      b. Where does change resistance occur within bureaucratic structures? In a long chain of command, does one resistant link impede the subordinate organization?

D. Guide for the Case Study Report

1. Audiences:

      a. ASFC Leadership and Supervisors. AFMC Leadership and Supervisors. May also be applicable to other military organizations.

      b. Academics – Case study builds on understanding of change management challenges and provides additional perspective through study of this organization. Management journal, business journal, or military leadership reading program.

2. Template Thesis Format

      a. Introduction – provide background into the organization and problem

            i. Change management has many issues and challenges, high failure rate and cost of slow or failed change. Leadership struggle to maintain performance and competitive edge through tumultuous times of change and disruption.

           ii. This organization is doing well with implementing this change program over time, and has devoted significant resources to the process.

         iii. A study of factors that have a strong impact on change success and failures will provide some insight into the themes that

leaders can leverage for further success and within areas that struggle.

b. Literature Review – Broad swath of seminal works and more modern research. Research into change management, employee motivation, leadership strategies for change, Innovative companies, culture change, employee ambivalence, fear of failure, change management models and processes currently used widely in large organizations.

c. Methodology and case description

    i. Single Case Study on AFSC organization, interviewing personnel from across the geographically-separated locations.

        1. Wright Patterson AFB

        2. Warner-Robbins AFB

        3. Tinker AFB

        4. Hill AFB

        5. Ogden AFB

    ii. Data collection – Supporting documentation will be gathered from Art of The Possible Share Point website as well as archival documents like meeting minutes, Commander's calls, work center briefings and teleconference agendas. Participant observations will also be conducted, and up to 20 members will be selected to interview for insights on successful and problematic change events.

    iii. Methodology - interviews will be transcribed and coded, analyzed for certain concepts that emerge as factors that leading influencers in change processes. Documents and participant observations will serve as reinforcement and triangulation of concepts found within interviews, or to counter the concepts discussed and add perspective.

d. Analysis and Results – findings will be highlighted and analyzed for highly occurring themes and Co-occurrences of pairs of themes together. Results of participant observations will be discussed as well as findings from document triangulation.

e. Conclusions and Recommendations – Discussion of findings as they pertain to the challenges of change management in this organization. Recommendations on how to use the highly-occurring and co-occurring themes for greater success will also be made. Brief coverage of themes occurring very low on the ranked list will also be discussed to add the perspective of the themes with lowest impact to change management.

f.   Conclusions

3. Exhibits to be developed: A simplified useful model or ranked list of highly important themes will be proposed to provide a simple explanation of key findings.

Appendix E. Case Study Code Book

Parent Code: <u>Data and / or Results – "DR"</u>

Change Efficiency - Efficiency of change (speed of change) - does the leadership use data to measure and communicate the speed of a change initiative, or passively hope for the best? Are data and results utilized to influence change within the organization?

Data-Driven Goals - Does leadership use of data to drive the creation of new goals, or are goals arbitrarily created? Does data provide a frame of reference for members to better understand a change initiative?

Early Victories - Do managers carefully use early victories to excite and motivate the members? Is there a culture of "early and often" recognition of incremental victories?

Job Satisfaction - Job satisfaction can dramatically effect members' view on change, as well as resistance levels. Does the organization survey/review/use information about job satisfaction to better understand their challenges? Is job satisfaction used by respondents when explaining change initiatives?

Recognition - Does leadership have a careful approach to recognize and promote the desired behavior? Public recognition programs can be useful to spread a message about the culture of the organization and the social norms for behavior.

Systematic Feedback - Do subordinates have the feedback system they need? Does the organization carefully manage the regular, systematic feedback to subordinates? Do leaders at different levels use this tool to guide small changes in the workforce?

Parent Code: <u>External Pressures - EP</u>

Backlog/Performance Measures - Is change resistance dependent on our performance measures versus the competition? Is change motivated or resisted based on workload factors, backlogs, or the absence of backlog? Do failing (or changing) performance measures influence the change implementation?

Competition - do the pressures of losing work/revenue/purpose to a competing organization help or hinder a change initiative? Is internal or external competition mentioned when respondents speak of change experiences?

Customer Needs - Does the organization centralize their change strategy around the needs of some downstream customer? Do individuals know what customers need? Does leadership use customers' needs to convey a sense of urgency to change?

Financial Constraints - Does a constrained financial environment help or hinder the change initiative? Does leadership use financial constraint to motivate change within the organization?

Need For Change - Do external pressures help or hinder the implementation of change initiatives? External pressure can provide positive motivation for change if the need for change is properly conveyed.

Quality - does our competition put pressure on us to make organizational change to maintain / increase quality levels? Does quality improvement over time impact a work center's willingness to pursue changes or resist changes? Is there a culture of constant striving to increase quality?

Stakeholder Interests - Are changes to support stakeholder interests likely to have higher or lower resistance levels? Are the stakeholders considered when a change is motivated within this organization?

Parent Code: Individual Attitudes/Actions - IA

Ambivalence – Used to categorize cynicism or indifference. Does ambivalence play a role in individuals' attitude toward change? Are users seen by leadership to "resist" when they are simply indifferent? Does leadership have a sense of ambivalence versus resistance?

Apprehension – Worry or fear - Do individuals display or discuss this emotion when recounting their stories? Does worry or uncertainty play a role in change resistance? Alternatively, users may have apprehension about resisting and the possible consequences in that act, possibly motivating compliance with change.

Attitudes - Do interviewees mention individuals' attitudes in discussion of change resistance? When recounting stories, do interviewees take time to explain attitudes of members of the work center? Are attitudes attended to and considered?

Comprehension - addresses anxiety, lack of understanding regarding change initiatives (beyond education). Lack of comprehension can stifle the actions of a member. Do they need more information or support? Are the changes easy to envision and comprehend?

Constructive Resistance (engagement) - Used in examples where individuals slowed down or reshaped an initiative thoughtfully due to needs seen from another perspective. Constructive feedback or "devil's advocate" attitudes can be useful to change managers.

Courage - (self-efficacy) Personal courage (or lack thereof) can be a source of resistance. Do users speak in terms of courage on an individual level or group level when addressing change stories from their past?

Curiosity - Did support for change occur in some cases merely out of curiosity? Are users inclined to participate or engage with change managers to learn more? Do marketing materials and presentations play to members' curiosity?

Education - Do interviewees refer to education as something that impacted resistance levels? Is education a key motivator or incentive? Does lack of education serve as an excuse? Does education create a power distance?

Empowerment - Do individuals feel involved, or free to act? Do they embrace the "supposed empowerment" leadership provides?

Enthusiasm - Does higher enthusiasm in general mean a person is more likely to onboard more quickly? Is there a link between general enthusiasm and change resistance? Are people with less enthusiasm more prone to resistance? Is enthusiasm generated intentionally by leaders to build support?

Identity – (or threats to) - Who am I? Who are we? Does this change threaten sense of self? Do people consider identity or threats to identity when approaching change? Does the organization cultivate a culture of certain identity?

Individuals' Needs - How does an individual participate/resist change as they interpret their needs (ahead of company) needs. This code also covers incentive-seeking behavior. Do leaders address individuals' needs when motivating a change? Do leaders sense when needs are not being met?

Participation/Involvement – Demonstration or compliance with behavioral norms is a gateway to start building participation in change. Are people involved early and throughout? Does leadership make it easy to get engaged, contribute, or practice the new system? Does peoples' early participation smooth out a change adoption?

Self-Awareness - Do individuals acknowledge their attitudes and resistance levels, or are they not aware that their behaviors help/hinder change initiatives? Do interviewees address this self-awareness in responding to questions?

Stakeholder/Ownership – Are members made stakeholders in the organizational goals? Is there a sense of ownership? Does sense of ownership increase willingness to change, or motivate members to resist?

Parent code: Leadership Attitudes/Actions - LA

Assumptions - do leaders make assumptions about compliance, or about the abilities/attitudes of the team? Can assumptions cause problems in communication? What do leadership members assume the change environment is before undertaking a challenge?

Authenticity - subordinates can see fake leaders a mile away. Is the leadership truly engaged and caring? Do leaders address this fact and take the time to demonstrate authenticity through actions? Are people more inclined to support a change if the leadership is authentic?

Change Paralysis - This refers to knowing what to do next, and freezing from change uncertainty. Do leaders experience change paralysis? What factors cause this? Is change paralysis the source of their resistance?

Create a felt need for change - Has leadership properly motivated the team? Military tends to "shield" subordinates from the situation to enable productivity and minimize distraction, but this can hinder change initiatives. Do subordinates know "the why"? Do they convey the true motivations for the change?

Disrupting Status Quo - Some leaders do not like to disrupt. "If it isn't broke, don't fix it mentality". Leaders should specifically address how the new program interacts with the old, and create a transition plan. Burning platforms and "out with the old' actions are examples of such disruption. Can also be used in the context of shaking up organizational norms or tribal behaviors.

Hard Work (involvement) - Visible leadership with "sleeves rolled up" mentality. Can subordinates see the hard work? Does leadership involvement reduce resistance? Can members observe leadership hard work in larger organizations?

Individualized Attention/Approach – Change resistance is different for every individual. Do leaders apply one strategy to a process, or do they take an individualized approach to building change support. Do members respond to this attention in a positive way?

Leader skills / Influence - All leaders are not created equal. Do certain skills or qualities lead to reduced resistance in individuals? Can leaders build skill in change management? Do leaders with more skill or influence have more success? Do members change their attitude on change based on leadership influence?

Leadership support (sponsorship) - leaders need to break down barriers for subordinates, and stamp their seal of approval on the initiative. If subordinates do not see leadership sponsorship, the initiative may not be "safe" to support. Is sponsorship evident?

Listening (feedback) - Listening to concerns, advice of subordinates. Does leadership provide routine feedback? Can broken feedback loops cause change resistance to build? Is the cycle of communication important or can communications be "one way?"

Momentum – Do leaders explain recent success and never give an end to aim for? Build momentum in the culture of change. Do they carefully build and use momentum to motivate change?

Motivation - Do leaders prove they are motivated, and take the motivation levels of subordinates into account / build motivation? What motivation strategies are employed and how can leaders see if their methods are working?

Resources/Obstacles - change is not easy, do leaders provision for resources, or work around obstacles if resources are short? Are constrained resources helpful in motivating change? Are obstacles up channeled and addressed?

Respect/Ego - Respect and ego are important. Do leaders have the appropriate levels of both? Do they intentionally show respect and care for the egos of subordinates? Do egos create barriers to change? Do outward signs of respect motivate certain members to support a change?

Role Modeling - Is the leader "walking the walk." This is not "do as I say, not as I do" but "do as I do" type of thinking. Is role modeling discussed in terms of resistance to change?

Senior Team Cohesion (unity) - Can subordinates see the top team working together? Infighting can stratify the team. Are messages carefully crafted and unified to give the workforce specific goals to aim for?

Strategic Vision / Compelling Vision - Leadership storytelling and a clear vision for the future. Do interviewees talk of the vision or leaders' strategies when discussing change resistance factors?

Parent Code: Qualities of the Organization – O

Bureaucracy - Does the organizational bureaucracy help or hinder the change initiatives. Bureaucracy can be used effectively or ineffectively. Does the organizational structure or process play a role?

Collaboration - collaboration can reduce resistance. Is there examples of collaboration across business units / functions / internal or external / across leadership boundaries. Do users increase support for change when more collaboration is taking place?

Common purpose (socialization) - can the entire group rally behind the change? Do all members see their part in the vision?" Are learning objectives socialized? Can certain members teach others and increase understanding through mutual learning and sharing?

Consistency (message) – Consistency of message can directly impact the levels of resistance. Do the organization take care to craft and publicize consistent messaging?

Culture of Change - Does the organization claim to have a culture of change? Is this culture a part of the identity, or experiencing a culture shift? Does culture of change help to speed the process of change adoption?

Handling Resisters (Personnel Changes) - Does the organization put pressure on resisters to change attitude or repurpose them? Does the organization reward the wrong behavior by not making these changes? Does it have a process to move individuals while retaining talent?

Message Penetration - Does the organization focus on penetration? Is there evidence that the promotion and communication are well thought out and strategically delivered throughout the organization?

Power/Politics - power and politics often play a role in the way members of the organization digest change initiatives. Can power and politics be helpful in change management?

Relationships and Trust - organizations that have do not have trust often struggle with change. High degrees of trust can short-circuit some of the resistance supporting conditions. Is this factor addressed by respondents when discussing change events?

Right People, Right Position - does the organization shift people into and out of certain positions to facilitate cultural change, or do they "work with what they have" and leave positions stationary? Is the organization highly dependent on certain personalities to influence efficient change?

Transparency - Does management share information "behind the curtain?" Do subordinates understand the situation and challenges, as well as external pressures? Are there secrets and rumors floating around the organization?

Parent Code: <u>Qualities of the Change Goals – G</u>

Change Fatigue - Does the organization focus on the levels of fatigue members are experiencing? Do they have a method to survey or review levels or methods to reduce the fatigue levels? Can change be throttled or adjusted to avoid such factors?

Complexity/Magnitude - is the change complexity and magnitude a concern in the level of resistance? Is the goal scaled appropriately?

Costs of Change - Does the organization recognize and address the costs and inefficiencies of constant change and balance them with the benefits of change? Certain systems can only optimize when they are allowed to run in a steady state for some time. Change can also influence talent in deciding whether to stay or move to another job.

Evolution/Revolution - evolutionary changes are smaller and more constant. Revolutionary changes are not as constant but much more disruptive/impactful. Does the organization use both modes of change appropriately? Can major changes motivate minor ones?
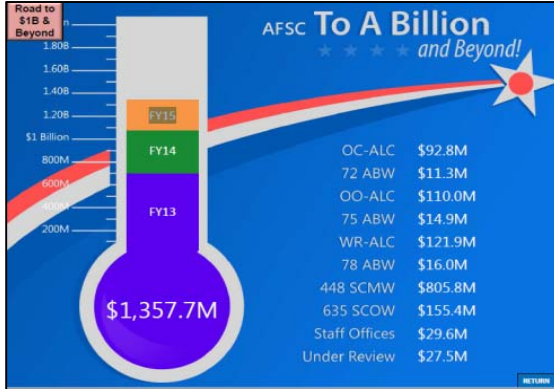
Identifying Key Issues - is the organization changing the appropriate things (as defined my members of the organization)? Do changes appropriately target the things that matter?

Other Success and Failures - Do members remember and refer to history when deciding if a new initiative should be supported/resisted? Does our internal reputation help or hinder resistance to new initiatives? Do leaders own the organizational past and use it to frame current change initiatives?

Pacing - Does organizational leadership strategize change initiatives for the appropriate pace. Is the pace of change deliberate and measured for the best pressure and results?

Persistence - Not all objectives meet the original intent or reach the expected level of success? Do organizational goals have the persistence to keep pressure on change initiatives when they slow? Do they "get back in the saddle" after a failure?

Appendix F. Examples of Organizational Artifact Types Collected

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14. ABSTRACT

   Resistance to change is a phenomenon that affects organizations almost universally. All organizations large and small are continuously challenged to adjust, evolve and innovate to gain or maintain competitive advantage and mission effectiveness. Alarmingly high failure rates are reported: 30-70% of change initiatives falling short of their prescribed intent or never attain the desired results.
   This research investigates how bureaucratic governmental organizations can address this truth, and how leadership can cultivate a flexible, agile culture that is more adaptable to the demands of constant change. This study uses case study methodology and qualitative research methods aid in the understanding of the nuances within the organizational culture of one such organization.

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