

Overcoming the organizational resistance in change management projects: the evolution of the best practices

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Abstract

Organizational resistance to change management has been an urgent issue in enterprises for more than 100 years, but in the 21st century it has become a determining factor in corporate transformations. Investments in technology, automation, and innovation alone do not guarantee success if employees actively and successfully resist the transformation process. The evolution of the best practices for overcoming organizational resistance in enterprises has been considered. The study focuses on management strategies that prioritize rapid decision-making and cost efficiency. The authors' approach to classifying resistance types (individual, group, general, and from top management) and their correlation with the stages of change implementation has been presented: planning, implementing, and consolidating changes in company's practical activities. The best practices of overcoming organizational resistance have been highlighted, forming three types of strategies such as "People are more important than changes", "Business is more important than change", and "Changes are necessary for survival". Moderate resistance can be helpful in facilitating discussion and clarifying the goals of changes, while strong resistance on several levels can lead to delays, increased costs, and further project failure. By rethinking traditional theories and relating the best practices to modern business dynamics, the study offers a comprehensive methodology for effectively managing organizational resistance within the framework of the proposed strategies.



Преодоление организационного сопротивления в проектах управления изменениями: эволюция лучших практик



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Аннотация

Организационное сопротивление при управлении изменениями остается актуальной проблемой в управлении предприятиями уже более 100 лет, однако в XXI в. оно стало определяющим фактором в корпоративных трансформациях. Инвестиции в технологии, автоматизацию и инновации сами по себе не гарантируют успеха, если сотрудники активно и успешно сопротивляются процессу трансформации. Рассмотрена эволюция лучших практик преодоления организационного сопротивления на предприятиях. Настоящее исследование сосредоточено на управленческих стратегиях, отдающих приоритет быстрому принятию решений и экономической эффективности. Представлены авторский подход к классификации типов сопротивления (индивидуальное, групповое, общее, со стороны высшего руководства) и их соотнесение с этапами внедрения изменений: планирование, реализация и закрепление изменений в практической деятельности организации. Выделены лучшие практики преодоления организационного сопротивления, формирующие три типа стратегий: «Люди важнее изменений», «Бизнес важнее изменений», «Изменения необходимы для выживания». Умеренное сопротивление может быть полезным, способствуя обсуждению и уточнению целей изменений, в то время как сильное сопротивление на нескольких уровнях может привести к задержкам, увеличению затрат и дальнейшему провалу проекта. Переосмысливая традиционные теории и соотнося лучшие практики с современной бизнес-динамикой, настоящее исследование предлагает комплексную методологию эффективного управления организационным сопротивлением в рамках предлагаемых стратегий.



INTRODUCTION

Organizational resistance (hereinafter referred to as OR) to change in organizations has long been a recognized challenge, both in terms of theory and practice. For over a century, scholars and practitioners have explored the causes, manifestations, and consequences of this phenomenon for organizational effectiveness. However, in the 21st century, characterized by rapid technological advancement, globalization, and frequent economic fluctuations, organizational resistance has become a critical factor. Today, organizational resistance is no longer simply an obstacle to change; it is a determinant that can either facilitate or hinder the success of transformation initiatives in companies across various sectors. Despite increased investments in advanced technologies, automation, digital platforms, and innovation, it has become widely recognized that these efforts often fail to achieve their intended outcomes without the active engagement and support of employees. Change initiatives may falter not due to the inadequacy of the technologies themselves, but rather due to resistance from the human systems that surround them. This resistance can manifest in various forms, such as skepticism, decreased productivity, open conflicts, or more subtle forms of non-compliance. Without a strategic approach to engaging the workforce and addressing their concerns, even well-funded transformation initiatives may fail to achieve their objectives.

This paper will examine the evolution of approaches to managing and overcoming organizational resistance in the context of both traditional and digital transformations. We will explore how historical methods rooted in early organizational theory have evolved into more sophisticated, economically informed strategies, such as participatory change management, emotional intelligence-based leadership, and organizational learning. The ability of a company to adapt depends not only on formal structures and processes but also on the informal corporate culture, trust, and motivation that influence employee behavior. Resistance to change is a natural human response, especially when it threatens established routines, roles, or social dynamics. The essential features of this resistance, as well as its psychological and organizational foundations, have been extensively documented in seminal works of the 20th century [Kotter, 1986; Drucker, 1967]. These works identify fear of the unfamiliar, loss of control, and concerns about job security as major sources of resistance. Over time, scholars have proposed various classifications of OR, differentiating between active and passive resistance, individual and collective forms, and

emotional and rational motivations [Kotter, 1986; Adizes, 2023]. Understanding these distinctions is essential for developing targeted approaches that not only minimize resistance but also utilize it as a potential catalyst for more sustainable and inclusive transformation.

By tracing the development of theories and practices aimed at overcoming OR, this study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how enterprises can navigate the human dimensions of transformation – particularly in the face of growing complexity and uncertainty in the modern business environment.

Presented study is ignoring the psychological aspects of the personal level (perceiving it as one of many types of reasons) and focused on economic and management approach of overcoming the organizational resistance. It means that presented best practices, that are forming the corporate strategy of change management, are much closer to quick managerial decisions and the economy of the enterprise than with a long search for psychological balance and a comfortable speed of change for involved persons. Although economic science knows examples when the value of these factors (psychological comfort, balancing the speed of changes and comfort) was great, but in the dynamic world of the 21st century there is no room left for such managerial luxury on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean [Drucker, 1967].

Organizational Change Management (hereinafter referred to as OCM) is a structured discipline focused on facilitating smooth transitions for individuals and teams as they move from the current state (AS-IS) to the desired future state (TO-BE). Its primary goal is to maximize adoption, minimize resistance, and ensure the success of change initiatives by leveraging proven methodologies, tools, and techniques¹. At the core of OCM is the recognition that successful change is not just about processes and systems – it's about people [Duck, 2002]. Gaining organizational buy-in and addressing the human side of change is critical to fostering long-term adoption and business impact. Providing Change Management teams with clear visibility into the processes in scope enhances their ability to identify affected stakeholders and understand the full impact of change [Koilkonda, Gudala, 2024]. This clarity allows them to develop targeted strategies for communications, training, job aids, and updated procedures, ensuring that employees are well-prepared and fully engaged when the change is implemented [Schantz, 2023]. Evolution of methods of overcoming the OR and best strategies in OCM are also corresponding with this and other special factors, that will be described in next sections.

STUDY GOAL AND METHODOLOGY

Among a significant number of classifications of types of organizational resistance and corresponding methods of overcoming it, the authors choose the matrix approach. This approach allows collecting the methods, approaches and best practices that determine the effective overcoming of resistance in two dimensions:

- the type of resistance from the point of view of its bearer – individual, group, total, top-management;
- the stage of the change implementation project – planning and preparation, direct implementation of changes in the company's processes, consolidation of changes in work practices [Paschenko, 2022].

Scientific task is to define the main factors, forming the barriers and features of OR in OCM projects during digital transformation of the organization. Study's goal is defining the best practices for every type of OR at any stage of project of enterprise transformation with focus on project approach (with all formal artifacts from Project Plan and timeline to Risk Registry). Chosen best practices are forming effective strategies that are described in this article with following names:

- People are above changes (as it's possible in XXI century);
- Business is above changes;
- Changes are necessary for survival.

The following methods should be highlighted as methods for solving the scientific task and achieving the stated study goal:

- systems analysis and deduction;
- the Pareto principle and the Occam razor principle allow us to identify the most popular and practically effective practices in managing the organizational resistance;
- the method of generalization and classification allows us to identify the most promising practices in terms of the balance of costs, risks and benefits received.

Overcoming of organizational resistance in change management project is part of common risk management [Loloiu, 2015]. This approach will be detailed described in next section of the article.

SCIENTIFIC PROBLEM AND SHORT LITERATURE OVERVIEW

Studying the evolution of organizational resistance in change management projects is the question of its reasons or features, closely connected with external environment. Main scientific problem is evaluating the effective methods of overcoming this resistance within budget and

intellectual restrictions of every change management project. Ever since Henri Fayol formulated (and confirmed in practice) the basic principles of the classical school of management, the introduction of innovations and the management of employee resistance have become obvious elements of regular management [Fayol, 1916]. It should be noted that the phenomenon of resistance to change in business and production has been studied by almost all the prominent economic thinkers of the XX century. Russian American applied mathematician and business manager Harry Ansoff (Igor Anosov) defined the resistance as a multifaceted phenomenon that causes unforeseen delays, additional costs and instability of the change process. This resistance always manifests itself in response to any changes. From the researcher's point of view, resistance is a manifestation of irrational behavior of the organization, a refusal to recognize new features of reality, to think logically and to implement in practice the conclusions of logical thinking [Ansoff, 1965].

In second half of XX century management of organizational resistance became the part of applied science – Organization development, that brings a new vision on best practices in this area. The main advantage of using the Organization development in this problem is a solid and system approach in managing the organizational resistance: from searching the reasons (f.e. fundamental factors in labor or business organization) and preventing the personal and group resistance to building the system of motivation and involvement of those who are satisfied and suppression of those who are dissatisfied. By the end of the 1980s, a number of theories had emerged that described OR processes in different ways. These include the structural-situational theory, the innovative, phenomenological, neo-institutional, conflict-game approaches, the theory of resource dependence, the theory of random transformations, theories of life cycles, and the theory of organizational ecology.

Putting aside psychological and behavioral motives, let us consider the most relevant feature of this process in the XXI century, namely: the necessity and sufficiency of the source of changes in the organization. Historically, two models have been considered:

- endogenous models, where the source of changes is the internal environment of the organization [Siegel, 1978];
- exogenous, where the main thing is the dynamics of the external environment [Kotler, 1971].

But from the current practical perspective it's clear: both models together are forming current mechanism of change management in many directions like digital transformation or implementation of tech innovations. Moreover, in high-tech

industries the real impact of external environment is so strong, that forming the real competition force in terms of in organization development [Porter, 1987]. This force for high-tech industries is much stronger than competitive strength of substitute products according to M. Porter that leads to rethinking competition in high-tech industries, considering the dominant influence of the need for constant change in the organization in order to ensure its world-class competitiveness [Paschenko, 2022]. In XXI century all outstanding managers know: your company shouldn't have dissatisfied employees and suppression is not a key method in managing the organizational resistance [Schank, 2023]. It means that best practices in managing the organizational resistance are out of formal corporate strategies from XX century and should be defined again (Picture) [Paschenko, 2022].

The dependence of methods for overcoming organizational resistance on the approach to implementing changes is obvious. This paper is presenting best practices in applying the project approach. It is quite reasonable in this case to describe some features of implementing changes by the project method and managing associated risks aimed at consistently reducing the likelihood of their occurrence.

Organizational resistance is precisely such a significant risk, invariably present in any organizational or production changes [Loloiu, 2015].

In addition, there are a number of qualitative factors whose values need to be maintained in the required states. Although they are not risks in the full sense, they are extremely important for the successful implementation of changes in the production processes:

- the level of organization's staff involvement in change management at each stage of the project;
- the degree of change support by each project/line manager at the level of his project/program/unit/office;

- the degree of change support by project's sponsors (organization's top-management) [Paschenko, 2022].

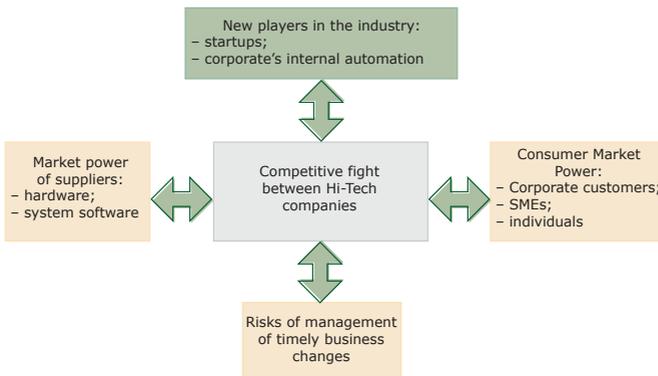
In a project-based approach, the management of organizational resistance risks differs methodologically at various stages of change's implementation:

- planning and preparation;
- implementing changes;
- embedding changes into the company's work practices (consolidation of changes).

The search for the best actual methods to overcome organizational resistance begins at the planning stage of changes by recording the risk in the risk register and developing response measures and, if necessary, a standard contingency plan in case the risk materializes. A study by D.S. Paschenko explored the importance of early communication with employers regarding upcoming production changes [Paschenko, 2014]. The study concluded that informing co-workers becomes advisable once the initiative team has gained a sufficient overview of the scale of the changes.

Furthermore, other study by D.S. Paschenko determined that employers in high-tech companies associate key activities in initiating changes and monitoring their success with their project or line managers [Paschenko, 2022]. Interestingly, a significant number of engineers believe that the project or line manager bears the greatest personal responsibility for the successful implementation of production changes. This implies that involving project managers in change management during the earliest stages of innovation planning is a crucial task.

At the same planning and preparation stage, formal and informal communication occurs with the development teams and all involved managers, leading to the identification of obvious resistance groups that are still unstructured.



Picture 1. Competitive forces for high tech industries in XXI century

Compiled by the authors on the materials of the source [Paschenko, 2022]

Managing the “organizational resistance” risk becomes more complex, as:

- separate risks, response plans, mitigation strategies, and contingency plans for overcoming organizational resistance in different groups can be identified;
- separate risks by levels of organizational resistance (engineers, managers, geographic offices, standalone divisions, etc.) can also be identified.

Resistance to change, as demonstrated in this study, constitutes a significant project risk in the context of organizational change management. Therefore, it is appropriate to apply established methods for managing project risks in order to address this issue. From a project management standpoint, overcoming resistance requires anticipating its occurrence, assessing its possible impact, and developing structured responses. The following sections explore common approaches to dealing with resistance to change that can be conceptualized as manageable risks.

1. Ignoring resistance. This is a straightforward, yet potentially risky approach. In certain specific and limited contexts, ignoring opposition can be justified – either when the cumulative authority and influence of the opposing group is negligible, or, conversely, when they have such a dominant position that confrontation would be ineffective and counterproductive. In the first case, resistance is not likely to derail the change initiative, while in the second, change agents may need to postpone direct engagement and adopt a long-term persuasive strategy. However, using this method has significant reputational and organizational risks, particularly if resistance escalates or symbolizes broader dissatisfaction. If strategic silence is chosen, it should be temporary and accompany ongoing monitoring of internal dynamics.

2. Mitigating the impact of resistance. A more proactive and sophisticated approach involves targeted remedial measures, typically focused on two areas. Firstly, organizations may attempt to structurally diminish the influence of resistant parties – for example, by restructuring workflows, altering reporting lines, or redistributing responsibilities to reduce the control of affected individuals over the transformation process. Secondly, a dialogic approach may be employed: through a systematic series of discussions, change agents can seek partial consensus, identify shared interests, and alleviate opposition by incorporating dissenting viewpoints into the conversation. This approach, rooted

in stakeholder engagement theory, fosters shared ownership of outcomes and prevents entrenched polarization.

3. Sharing Responsibility for Change Implementation. A frequently overlooked, yet effective strategy for implementing change is to redistribute responsibility for managing resistance among actors within the existing power structure of the organization, particularly those who are invested in the success of the proposed change initiative. This involves transferring formal responsibility for managing the change to senior stakeholders or influential leaders within the organization. By doing so, the change agents can insulate themselves from direct opposition, while leveraging the authority and credibility of these influential figures. This approach often leads to greater acceptance of the change among resistant groups, as it appears that the initiative is supported not only by external consultants and distant executives, but also by trusted internal figures within the organization who can help translate abstract change objectives into tangible organizational benefits.

In all these approaches, timing and psychological dynamics play a critical role. The preparatory phase for organizational change, prior to the official implementation, can last for weeks or even months, depending on the scale and complexity of the initiative. During this phase, the main task for change management teams is to prevent the conditions that may lead to collective resistance. Particular attention should be paid to the emergence of unofficial leaders, hidden narratives, and emotional contagion, which can trigger protest behavior or non-compliance. It is crucial to note that at this early stage, resistance is often irrational and driven by emotions. Since the extent and implications of the changes have not been fully communicated or understood by employees, they may react based on rumors, uncertainty, or concerns about potential disruptions [Duck, 2022]. Therefore, timely communication, leadership based on empathy, and inclusive planning are essential tools for reducing uncertainty and preventing resistance from becoming a long-term barrier to transformation.

This means that at this stage of managing the “organizational resistance” risk, rational methods of persuasion and communication should also include elements of psychology and various manifestations of emotional intelligence by the members of the change management team. The group of risks associated with organizational resistance is already quite diverse in terms of response plans

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by the end of the preparation and planning stage. As an illustration, we will provide an example of a part of the risk map in terms of this group of risks in Table 1.

The organizational resistance management at the planning and preparation stage is accompanied by [Paschenko, 2022]:

- ensuring maximum transparency at least in terms of the goals of the changes, if they are not threatening to the team and its value system;
- feedback from representatives of groups and teams;
- positioning changes as predetermined and inevitable, however, with the possibility of modifications and clarifications;
- striving for maximum generalization of the private goals of authoritative employees with the goals of changes for the entire organization;
- allocating at least minimal time for internal discussion and adoption of the main declared goals of changes, involving authoritative employees in adjusting goals, declaring the openness of changes for everyone;
- using benchmarking as a real argument in convincing and motivating the teams.

The next stage of the change implementation project is lasting much time, because the planned innovations acquire real features, are analyzed, documented, and

implemented in production. The motive for organizational resistance is now much more rational, risk management becomes more complicated. At this stage, overcoming the emerging organizational resistance requires additional resources and, above all, support for changes by the sponsors of the company transformation. Thus, the possibility of losing top management support becomes a factor impacting on the management of the risks of organizational resistance. This relationship remains until the end of the company transformation.

On the other hand, the growing rationalization of organizational resistance makes it easier to break down the overall risk category associated with resistance to change into specific, manageable components. Each component has its own mitigation strategy, allowing for targeted engagement with employees who exhibit resistance. This approach uses evidence-based techniques to persuade individuals, drawing on anticipated positive outcomes from the change process and benchmarking to demonstrate the benefits of the change. At this stage in enterprise transformation, managing risks related to resistance is an integral part of daily management activities.

Risk description	Priority	Reaction Plan	Emergency Plan
Organization Resistance Group			
Possible refusal to participate in change management. Project team A. Declared motive – rush job in the project. Real motive – resistance of project manager A	High	Avoid risk. Involve the project manager and the entire team in interaction. Learn more about the personal motivation of project team members to resist	Involve the company's top management. Include the project manager in the change management team
Insufficient involvement of Department B in planning and detailing changes. Reason – weak connection between production changes and Department B activities	High	Reduce the impact of the risk. Involve the head of Department B in the change management initiative group, pointing out the clear interrelations between production changes and the daily work of Department B	Carry over changes affecting Department B to the next iteration of change implementation
Difficulty in involving branch C employees from Mexico in change management (geographical distance, time difference)	Medium	Reduce the impact of risk. Involve the most active employees of the branch in the format of one-day sessions. Use remote communication channels for regular meetings	Organizing business trips to the Mexican branch at key points of the project with intermediate results, discussions, and feedback
...

Table 1. Example of risk management document

Compiled by the authors on the materials of the study

The presence and intensity of resistance can have a significant impact on the implementation of plans, particularly with regard to timelines and the scope of change across different organizational units or geographically dispersed locations. To effectively manage these risks during the implementation phase, it is important to gradually reduce the likelihood of their occurrence. This can be achieved through a systematic approach to each risk, while maintaining key parameters for change management, such as employee engagement, within pre-defined and acceptable limits. Such an approach ensures control over the transformation process and minimizes the risk of disruptive changes. It is crucial to maintain high levels of support from internal sponsors throughout the project. To achieve this, it is essential to ensure that:

- ensure that project sponsors are kept fully informed about current progress and challenges of the project;
- develop scenario options for stages of implementation, taking into account different levels of potential challenges, required timelines, and resource requirements.

It is worth mentioning separately that the involvement of employees in change management continues at this stage. Even after the implementation of new practices in production, the opinions of employees are extremely important when summing up and analyzing the results. From the study by D.S. Paschenko it follows that in most cases, the analysis of the results of production changes is carried out "several months after implementation", which means that the interest of employees in production changes must be maintained at a sufficient level for a long time [Paschenko, 2014].

Final and very important stage of any OCM project is the consolidation of changes and turning the new practices in everyday business process. There are some important approaches to reach a success in this direction [Paschenko, 2022]:

- 1) implemented changes should be a part of KPI/KRI scope of elements on individual and group levels;
- 2) automation of new processes should prevent any opportunity of ignoring implemented changes;
- 3) formal documentation of new processes should be actual and should be learnt by the teams of employments in post-implementation trainings;
- 4) the corporate culture should be shifted to accept new business processes as a new corporate standard of everyday business;
- 5) initiative team who is managing the implementation of changes should do the analysis of the results and methods of people motivation to follow new rules and business process.

In high-tech industries, organizational resistance can manifest itself in various forms. Engineers perceive changes and their underlying causes at their level of understanding, and

accordingly evaluate their impact on production processes. Misunderstanding the reasons and consequences of changes, misjudging the labor costs involved in implementing them, and a mismatch between the perceived objectives of change and other team (personal, group, and production) goals can lead to persistent resistance within the organization.

The study by Paschenko examined the differences in how managers and engineers in the high-tech industry define the problem of organizational resistance to change management [Paschenko, 2014]. Interestingly, the study found that engineers identified this as only the third most common problem encountered in practice, affecting less than half of experts. In contrast, managers in high-tech companies considered it the second most common problem and approximately 60% of experts experienced it in their work. Additionally, both experts regardless of their hierarchical level identified "Formal implementation of changes without results or understanding of goals" as the most significant challenge. Therefore, engineers appear to be less likely to perceive the presence of organizational resistance as a major obstacle to implementing changes in production processes.

According to Paschenko's findings, the actual utilization of suppression measures appears to be more prevalent in the implementation of change practices among managers than among engineers [Paschenko, 2022]. At the same time, both engineering and management personnel acknowledge the efficacy of involving employees in the planning and execution of production modifications. At the same research engineers determined that the most effective motivation technique for supporting and consolidating production changes that they encountered in their industry practice was "Encouraging and motivation to the use of new practices". Whereas negative motivation, censure or monetary penalties are not popular and are not perceived by engineers as adequate approaches to consolidating changes. This is a clear example of the influence of labor and industry behavioral factors on engineers' perception of the need to follow corporate standards, including in the field of production. Key findings indicate that both managers and engineers acknowledge employee involvement as the most effective method to overcome resistance, with positive motivation playing a critical role in sustaining changes [Paschenko, 2014]. Ultimately, ensuring long-term adherence to new practices requires integration into KPIs, process automation, and continuous engagement with employees.

STUDY RESULTS

The main results of this study include the set of best practices in OCM that are overcoming the main barriers and meet the main risks of organizational resistance. That's

why all best practices are closely connect with factors of everyday business of company that started the changes in framework of digital transformation. Those everyday work's factors are defined in this section in dimensions of stage of changes implementation (planning and preparation, direct implementation of changes in the company's processes, consolidation of changes in work practices) and the type of OR (individual, group, total, top-management) in following Table 2.

Bureaucratic resistance in organizational changes is one of the most persistent barriers – not in the necessary sense of structured governance, but in its entrenched, self-perpetuating form that prioritizes preserving turf over driving pro-

gress. Cyril Northcote Parkinson's seminal observation, now known as Parkinson's Law, highlights a troubling phenomenon: bureaucratic organizations tend to expand administrative ranks irrespective of actual workload or need. This is driven by two reinforcing dynamics: the multiplication of subordinates, where leaders prefer to expand their own domains, and the tendency for officials to create work for one another, fostering an environment where inefficiencies become embedded in the system. In many organizations, this bureaucratic inertia manifests as resistance to change, particularly in large-scale transformation efforts. Instead of focusing on what is best for the enterprise, teams often fixate on protecting their existing roles, budgets, and influence.

Factor	Impacts on OCM for next types	Highest impact on OCM in stages of implementation	Comments
Bureaucratic Resistance	Groups and top-management	Planning and preparation, direct implementation of changes	Keeping status quo and prevent AS-IS model of business process be turned into TO-BE
Long-term motivation of employees	Individuals, in rare cases – groups	Direct implementation of changes and consolidation of changes	Short-term motivation works only at one stage of the process, so company should think how to motivate individuals and groups for the whole project
Incomplete consistency of business processes and lack of responsibility and involvement of managers and employees	Groups and total	Planning and preparation, direct implementation of changes in the company's processes, consolidation of changes in work practices	Major factor for big and huge corporations and handling this factor is very difficult because it takes a lot of time and efforts in correct identification of "broken" business processes
Strategic Alignment of Changes	Top-management and groups	Planning and preparation, consolidation of changes in work practices	Implementation of changes is not a single action – it's a part of tactic/strategic efforts in organization
Lack of business processes formalization and documentation	Groups and total	Planning and preparation	–
Disparate operational data in different sources	Top-management and groups	Planning and preparation	–
"Bronze monument" of corporate culture	Top-management and total	Planning and preparation, direct implementation of changes in the company's processes, consolidation of changes in work practices	Not every corporate culture is flexible and ready for changes. A lot of branded big corporation had promoted their corporate culture inside of organization within decades of years, and now this culture became "a bronze monument" that is preventing business processes from any changes

Table 2. Main factors in OCM projects and its impact
Compiled by the authors on the materials of the study

This resistance is further exacerbated by system proliferation, where overlapping technologies, siloed processes, and complex vendor relationships make it difficult to streamline operations. As a result, organizations may invest heavily in efficiency initiatives, only to see the benefits erode as different factions work against one another, offsetting improvements with new inefficiencies. Without a holistic, enterprise-wide perspective, leadership struggles to identify essential vs. redundant resources, making strategic execution difficult and digital transformation efforts slow, expensive, and prone to failure. True transformation requires breaking down bureaucratic silos, fostering cross-functional accountability, and aligning incentives with organizational goals rather than individual fiefdoms.

One of the most studied methods of overcoming the OR is personal and group motivation, based on employee motivational theories [Radojevic, 2020]. A prominent one is Herzberg's two factor theory². Herzberg and his collaborators studied fourteen factors to identify the drivers of job satisfaction. As a result of this study the categories of motivation were identified:

- hygiene Factors, which decrease job satisfaction if expectations are not met (these include job status, compensation, job security, working conditions, and benefits);
- motivating Factors, which improve satisfaction because they satisfy the need for growth and self-actualization (these include performing satisfying work, opportunities for advancement, the potential for personal growth, responsibility, recognition the achievements).

The implication of this is that organizations must meet expectations on hygiene factors, but they also must focus on ways to motivate employees by providing them with increased ownership in their roles and autonomy to drive innovations in their scope. The change management team should use the long-term motivation of employees as a factor in their involvement in the changes that have begun. In general, increasing ownership of participants of OCM is crucial important in any change management strategy. Many organizations have grown increasingly complex in their people, process, and technology environments. The net result is overlapping responsibilities and siloed organization that hinder communication and collaboration. Maintaining

alignment becomes nearly impossible as senior leaders have lacked insights into the work at the practitioner level and a lack of transparency inhibits teams from coordinating on large change initiatives. To break this cycle, organizations need to embrace systems thinking which addresses this challenge by viewing the organization as interconnected parts and understanding how their relationships collectively impact performance. To achieve systems thinking requires creating and maintaining a model of the organization which represents all the actions, resources, and operating information which will foster alignment, enable precision in determining the impacts of change, and enable clear accountability. Boosting participants' ownership of the new business process, ensuring the success of the change management project, and applying strict risk management in Organizational Change Management (OCM) create a strong systems-thinking foundation for digital transformation.

The key factors of lack of business processes formalization, documentation and strategy alignment should be met with following approaches:

- 1) planning the changes in the organization via Strategic Alignment, modeling the Organization, documenting processes in Inventory of Processes;
- 2) preparing the organization for changes via Data Integration and Establishing Project method in OCM.

The change process always begins with strategic intent. The strategy team conducts an external analysis using frameworks like PESTEL (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental, and Legal) and Porter's Five Forces to assess the competitive landscape (like in Picture modification). In parallel, they analyze the internal environment to assess strengths and weaknesses relative to organizational expectations. This provides strategic decision-makers with critical insights, enabling them to define strategic priorities, establish goals and metrics, and develop actionable strategic plans. Thus, any strategic change and OCM project should be aligned with the practical plan for implementing the company's goals, which means the strong demand of strategic alignment of any OCM projects.

The next step in planning and preparing changes is modeling the current state of the organization's business processes also known is AS-IS Model in digital transformation

Bureaucratic resistance in organizational changes is one of the most persistent barriers – not in the necessary sense of structured governance, but in its entrenched, self-perpetuating form that prioritizes preserving turf over driving progress.

projects³. The key to creating this model is identifying a 'ground truth' – an authoritative anchor that unifies all operational data. Ground truth is the definitive source of truth, ensuring accuracy and consistency across all perspectives. The most effective ground truth serves as a common language, aligning business, technology, and governance. It's a language of business processes and its description at specific notifications or methodologies. Those processes should be documented in Inventory of Processes [Schank, 2023].

To successfully implement this approach, every process within the organization – or at least within the part undergoing transformation – must be identified. At this stage, detailed process models are not yet necessary; simply establishing a process name, definition, and ownership provides significant value by serving as the organization's common language for alignment. The method for collecting this information is critical: in this study presented a structured interview-driven approach ensures comprehensiveness and accuracy. This process follows a top-down methodology, beginning at the highest level of a business unit with a fundamental question: "What work do you perform?". The responses are translated into high-level process group names. This exercise is repeated as the hierarchy is broken down further, continuing until the organization reaches distinct, well-defined process names.

At each level of the hierarchy, process ownership must be assigned, ensuring clear accountability for both day-to-day operations and change management activities. To maintain integrity, formal attestation is a crucial step. This process moves bottom-up:

- frontline process owners attest to the accuracy and completeness of the inventory;
- their direct leadership validates and signs off on their portion;
- this continues up the chain until final attestation is secured from the head of the business unit.

This ensures that everyone in the organization is on record that this information is accurate and complete which will mitigate disputes when it's leveraged. The result is a process taxonomy which details the full breakdown of processes and ownership which is your common language.

As it was mentioned above the organization on the way from AS-IS state to TO-BE state should be prepared to changes and whole of organization's operating data should be in integrated view. Organizations generate and store vast amounts of operational data across disconnected, siloed repositories, making it difficult to access a comprehensive view of how the business operates. As a result, change initiatives and problem resolution efforts often require weeks or even months of research just

to piece together the current state. Without a unified approach, organizations struggle with inefficiencies, duplication of efforts, and delays in transformation efforts. The new process taxonomy serves as an ideal mechanism for aligning disparate operational data under a common business-oriented language.

Effective organizational change management requires the integration of efforts and methodologies across all organizational levels.

To achieve this, data must be imported into a process documentation tool (information system). Once imported, the next step is to associate relevant operational resources and data with the corresponding processes, creating a structured and interconnected Operational Intelligence repository [White, 2005]. This repository becomes a powerful tool for impact analysis, providing immediate visibility into how any change initiative will affect various aspects of the organization. By identifying which processes require modification or will be impacted, it becomes possible to trace dependencies across systems, people, third-party vendors, risks, and compliance requirements.

An additional critical operational consideration in the successful management of organizational change is the degree to which proposed transformations, and their anticipated outcomes, align with the existing organizational culture, including established bureaucratic structures, and their impact on employee behavior and organizational dynamics [Olakunle, 2021]. Empirical observations and professional experience suggest that one of the greatest challenges encountered in environments characterized by significant organizational resistance, especially during digital transformation efforts, is what can be described as the "bronze monument" of corporate culture. This term refers to the persistence and inflexibility of deeply ingrained values, norms, procedures, and informal power structures that resist change, despite formal structural or technological modifications already implemented. This phenomenon is particularly evident in cases where an organization has made significant progress towards the implementation of its desired TO-BE state. Despite the introduction of new systems, processes, and technologies, residual cultural resistance often hinders the intended transformation. Employees may outwardly comply with new directives, while maintaining underlying behaviors aligned with the previous organizational logic. In these instances, resistance is not manifested through overt opposition, but rather

through a subtle, systematic adherence to traditional practices, creating a disconnect between the formal organizational structure and actual operational practices.

Accordingly, effective change management strategies should address not only the structural and procedural aspects of transformation, but also engage with the cultural and bureaucratic obstacles that shape the organizational identity and how employees perceive change. Aligning the change initiative with the existing corporate culture is crucial to mitigate deeply rooted resistance and foster authentic and sustained behavioral adaptation among organization members. The shifting the corporate culture – a deeply ingrained set of beliefs, behaviors, and power structures that influence how work gets done – is a part of OCM project and very important during changes consolidation. In many organizations, bureaucracy and resistance to change stem from unclear accountability and a lack of autonomy, where employees feel constrained by rigid hierarchies, silos, and limited access to information. Overcoming these barriers requires both new structures and empowerment, and Process Inventory serves as a key enabler by providing the clarity and transparency needed for accountability, while leadership must ensure that employees have the tools and autonomy needed to drive innovation. At its core, a Process Inventory establishes a foundation of accountability by clearly defining process ownership within an organization. However, accountability alone is not enough to foster

a culture of innovation and transformation. Employees must also have the autonomy to act on their insights, experiment with new ideas, and contribute to innovation projects.

In conclusion of the solution of the scientific task of determining the main factors that form barriers and OR in change management projects, it should be noted, that Project approach in change management is also aimed on transparency of following changes and includes the initiative team of changes participants into the formal structure – official project with clear scoping and strict business requirements. Once a change initiative is identified, a project Charter is developed to define its goals, project management ownership, plan, and – most critically – scope and business requirements. By leveraging a common process language, charters can precisely identify which processes fall within the scope of change. This structured approach enhances alignment with strategic plans, provides traceability for senior leaders to monitor progress, and establishes clear accountability for execution.

The study is presenting the best practices for every type of OR at any stage of project of enterprise transformation with focus on project approach in following Table 3. All mentioned above methods are packed into best practices and they are grouped by the types of OR (individual, group, total, top-management) and by the stages in the change management project. This table summarizes the achievement of the scientific goal of the study.

Stage	Individuals	Group	Total	Top-management
Planning and preparation	Aligning changes with personal goals of leaders. Personal long-term motivation	Aligning changes with group goals. Involving teams into active change management and digital transformation. Internal discussion and adopting the main declared goals of changes	Modeling the organization. Process Inventory and Operational Intelligence repository. Data integration. Early informing about changes. Managing the OR as a digital transformation project risk	Aligning changes with corporate strategy and personal goals of top-management. Data integration (real data to define real capabilities). Change management is above than bureaucratic rules
Direct implementation of changes	Explanatory work with suppression elements. Involvement into active change management and digital transformation	Autonomy and group responsibility for new business processes. Benchmarking as a real argument in convincing and motivating the teams	Managing the OR as a digital transformation project risk. Clear goal, requirements, and scope of changes in digital transformation project	Regular reports to top-managers. Sharing the responsibility for OCM with top-managers

Table 3. Best practices in management of OR in project base approach

Compiled by the authors on the materials of the study

Stage	Individuals	Group	Total	Top-management
Consolidation of changes in everyday work practices	Strict automation of new business process to prevent its ignoring. Corresponding personal KPI/KRI. Continuous engagement with employees	Encouragement and motivation to the use of new practices. Corresponding team KPI/KRI	Shift in corporate culture. Managing the OR as a digital transformation project risk. Post-implementation trainings for teams and individuals	Compromise on the timing and volume of change implementation in every project. Quick financial and economy analysis of impact of the implemented changes. Planning next stage of changes in next OCM project to resolve any new challenges

End of Table 3

Effective organizational change management requires the integration of efforts and methodologies across all organizational levels. Based on the authors' professional experience, three predominant types of change management strategies can be identified, each representing distinct priorities in the management of transformation processes:

1. "People are above changes" strategy. This approach prioritizes the retention and engagement of existing managers and key personnel over strict adherence to change management protocols. In these cases, the composition of the change team is determined more by the perceived expertise or authority of specific individuals rather than by alignment with business transformation objectives. While this strategy may be employed by leading global corporations, it is more common in organizations where senior leadership lacks a thorough understanding of strategic change management. This approach may provide short-term stability, but it often hinders structural innovation and process improvement.
2. "Business is above changes" strategy. Under this model, the main focus is on achieving critical business goals, such as market share growth, profitability, and enterprise value, rather than ensuring the systematic implementation of change processes. This strategy is often

adopted in situations where there is acute market pressure, for example, during economic downturns, before mergers, geographic expansions, or changes in ownership structures. In these circumstances, change is seen as a means to achieve urgent business objectives, sometimes at the cost of long-term organizational flexibility.

3. "Changes are necessary for survival" strategy. This strategy is implemented in crisis situations where opportunities for proactive change were previously overlooked, leaving the organization without an alternative but to immediately and comprehensively implement change. Under these circumstances, implementing change becomes an existential necessity, often taking precedence over other economic or operational concerns. The focus is on rapidly adapting to prevent further deterioration, even if it means incurring short-term disruption or sacrificing performance in the short term.

These three strategic approaches reflect varying degrees of alignment between the human, structural, and business aspects of change. Their selection depends not only on situational factors but also on the ability of leadership to balance short-term requirements with long-term transformation objectives. In Table 4 authors listed the most demanded best practices in overcoming the OR by those three strategies, mentioned above.

Strategy	Most demanded practices (from planning to consolidation)
People are above changes	Early informing about changes. Personal and group involvement in change management and digital transformation. Aligning changes with personal goals of leaders and top-managers with current group goals. Internal discussion and adopting the main declared goals of changes. "Lazy" project approach without clear parameters like scope or timeline. Data integration. Managing the OR as a digital transformation project risk. Autonomy and group responsibility for new business processes. Continuous engagement with employees. Encouraging and motivating teams to the use of new practices. Compromise on the timing and volume of change implementation in every project. Post-implementation trainings and shift in corporate culture. Planning next stage of changes in next OCM project to resolve any new challenges

Table 4. Best practices united in strategies of OCM

Compiled by the authors on the materials of the study

Strategy	Most demanded practices (from planning to consolidation)
Business is above changes	Strong and continues alignment of changes with corporate strategy. Modeling the Organization. Process Inventory and Operational Intelligence repository. Data integration. Project approach with visible impact from changes on business. Involving teams into active change management and digital transformation. Explanatory work with suppression elements. Managing the OR as a digital transformation project risk. Post-implementation trainings and shift in corporate culture. Quick financial and economy analysis of impact of the implemented changes. Planning next stage of changes in next OCM project to resolve any new challenges
Changes are necessary for survival	Change management is above than bureaucratic rules. Strict project management approach with all formal artefacts. Process Inventory and Operational Intelligence repository. Data integration. Explanatory work with suppression elements. Regular reports to top-managers with reasonable feed-back from them. Benchmarking as a real argument in convincing and motivating the teams. Strict automation of new business process to prevent its ignoring. Corresponding personal and team KPI/KRI. Post-implementation trainings and shift in corporate culture. Quick financial and economy analysis of impact of the implemented changes. Planning next stage of changes in next OCM project to resolve any new challenges

End of Table 3

The application of certain best practices, their situational effectiveness and capital intensity are unique for each digital transformation program in a particular corporation. However, the practical experience of the authors and the results of theoretical research confirm the adequacy of the chosen approaches in practical digital transformation projects. The formation of OCM strategies (covering all stages of the change management project) completes the search for a solution to the scientific task and allows considering all organizational factors and corporate barriers.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study highlight the critical role of best practices in timely organizational change management. The research demonstrates that successful change initiatives depend on a structured, multi-dimensional approach that integrates business process modeling, risk management, strategic alignment. The study identifies key dimensions of change implementation—planning and preparation, direct implementation, and consolidation of new practices—along with the types of organizational resistance (individual, group, total, and top-management). A key takeaway from this study is the deep interconnection between best practices in OCM and the everyday operational factors of a company undergoing digital transformation.

Research shows that resistance often stems from unclear accountability and undefined and non-repeatable business processes. Addressing this requires actions such

as conducting process inventories and creating data and process repositories that provide transparency, accountability, and alignment. Modeling the organization in clear «AS-IS» and «TO-BE» models helps to understand the current and desired state of the organization, define transformation goals, and ensure a smooth transition. Consistent application of best practices can reduce OR as the organization moves closer to the desired «TO-BE» model, but it is even more effective for the change management team to define a single OR management strategy, forming it from a set of such best practices. Considering operational factors and corporate barriers, the following strategies are recommended for organizations:

- People are above changes – focused on maintaining key personnel engagement and ensuring leadership buy-in, sometimes at the expense of strict change implementation parameters;
- Business is above changes – prioritizes business performance, profitability, and market position while implementing the changes to support financial and operational goals;
- Changes are necessary for survival – a high-priority approach where changes must be implemented rapidly and decisively to ensure the company’s survival, often requiring strict project management techniques.

As the recommendations for organizations the authors, that helps to improve the success rate of digital transformation and OCM initiatives, organizations should adopt a holistic and structured approach that integrates strategy, process management, and risk management. The following key recommendations emerge from this study:

- adopt a system thinking approach: view any change as an interconnected process that affects multiple business functions and is linked to the organization's strategy, rather than as an isolated event;
- formalize organizational knowledge: creating an inventory of processes and ensuring data-driven decision-making are crucial for transparency and alignment;
- strengthen leadership involvement: senior leaders must move beyond high-level sponsorship and engage in hands-on decision-making, ensuring alignment across business units and actively addressing OR;
- consider change as elements of corporate strategy implementation;
- leverage employee engagement techniques: successful OCM depends on getting employees involved in the change

process through empowerment, recognition, and motivation strategies;

- improve risk management in change projects: OR should be formally identified as a risk category, with structured mitigation plans.

The best practices identified in the study provide a foundation for building change management strategies and minimizing organizational resistance. Applying such a strategy helps to achieve a balance between rigorous project-based approaches to change implementation and the necessary flexibility – ensuring that transformation efforts are well-documented and strategically aligned, while remaining adaptive to the human and cultural factors within the organization.

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