



Learning to Change: A Suggestive Outlook

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Basic reason for Change

Among the creatures of the world, wisdom and genius differ from species to species. But man is the only creature whose individuality differs from person to person. This individuality results into changes in thinking &/or changes in doing work; and the positive outcome of all such changes is termed as “progress”.

Organizational Change

According to William Drayton (1776-1846), “Change starts when someone sees the next step.” In case of organizations that strive to perform more, change is a natural, continuous process. Although all changes are normally painful, only those organizations having excellent management strategies can face those changes boldly, and turn each of the ‘obstacles-on-the-way’ to ‘opportunities-to-the-destination’. Although the telecommunications entity had a number of transformations to reach the status of Nepal Telecommunications

Corporation (NTC), all those past transformations were under the cent percent ownership of the Government. On the other hand, the present transformation of the same entity to “NEPAL TELECOM” is, however, different as the entity has changed from “the-only-one” to “one-of-the-many” telecom operators of the country.

From the perspectives of those employees that seek challenge and an opportunity for life-long learning, this organizational change has opened up a vast fertile ground. With limited exception, ‘Change’ is accepted by many as the means to stay updated, agile and smart.

From customer perspective, the organizational change in NEPAL TELECOM is simply “huge”. How much change is coming in the next 10-years may be hard to predict since telecom and IT sectors are evolving at a speed unimaginable, but it is for sure that Nepal

will see 10,00,000 (ten lakh) new GSM mobiles & 10,00,000 (ten lakh) CDMA mobiles within a couple of years in addition to the “evolutionary” telecom services and “revolutionary” wireless broadband services.

From the soft aspects of this transformation from NTC to NEPAL TELECOM, the organizational values and priorities should not all be transformed on “as it is” basis, but has to be “rationally” modified and “strategically” implemented to realize the objectives of the new organization. In other words, the old values have to be set aside in the safe vault of history, and the present time should be fully utilized with new thinking to drive the organization to a new setup.

Side-kicks of Organizational Change

Whether or not the organizational change is visible to the external world, no change can go smoothly without some sort of internal chaos, confusion and resistance. Employees may build up resistance with demands of their own to ensure better pay, job guarantee, etc. And, the customers may, at least, experience confusion and disruption in service during the process of change. The main concern of the loyal customers might be, “How are they going to affect me with those changes?” Depending on how the symptoms of change are transmitted to them, the customers decide whether to stick with or consider switching to the competitor.

Reasons for employee resistance

People normally resist any kind of change. There are many reasons why people resist change. The main reason is “fear”, and the list may be quite long. But, in general, fear of losing identity, fear of losing power, fear of losing job, so on and so forth are the reasons



for knowingly or unknowingly resisting changing with organizational changes.

For those employees that decide (although temporarily) to resist change, the shortest answer to the issue of changing with the organization might be, "I have made my decision; do not confuse me with facts!"

Consequences of Not Changing

It is very natural for the organization in strategic transformation to look-usually silently, within the organization-for some forward thinking, result oriented employees.

If somebody refuses to change, that means he loses a potential opportunity with the organization, where he could have, otherwise, played a laudable role in the change process. On the other hand, resisting change might derail the employee altogether from the organization, or at least, from the opportunity to learn new skills, which otherwise could uplift his own price tag. When the organization has changed, or at least the surrounding has changed, it is better that one should as well try to change.

Employee's individual contribution

"Change yourself first"

Nothing is going to make a difference to you unless you agree to change. Whenever asked for, never hesitate to provide your personal, constructive criticism to the change process, and your recommendations for helping it make a success.

Although the Latin proverb says, "Honesty is praised, but it starves", stay honest (as always & do not change) because people agree to the point that 'not the full stomach', but 'honesty' is the only perennial source of contentment.

"Change your workplace"

The easiest path to begin accepting change is to change your workplace without affecting the performance of your colleagues. Change the position of your working table or change the location of the picture hanging on the wall behind you. Changing your workplace not only gives you a new perspective to the surrounding, but definitely increases the "positive factor" to flow in your veins by simply inhibiting monotony.

"Be a Change Agent"

Human beings are the most difficult thing to handle. You cannot enforce "sustainable change" by means of power or brute force. As it is true with this epigram, "You can take your horse to the pond, but you cannot make him drink", it would be a futile attempt to try "forcing" a human being to accomplish

something that he does not want from within. However, there is a way out: Somehow one should encourage the subject (friend, family, colleagues, subordinates,...) to change from within; and your effort could be the impetus for others to change 'positively' to help meet the organizational goals.

Organizational efforts to facilitate Change

(a) Increased communication & regular interaction

The responsible members of the change process should communicate and explain to the entire organization about the changes in the pipeline. As 'waiting' is always painful, such interactions would also ease the employees to cope with changes that would be going to "strike" in near future.

This regular interaction (or, at least the exchange of emails) will also educate people as to why some particular changes might be more painful than the other one. Some suggestions on how to tackle change on personal level would make the employee's life easier.

(b) Mechanism to check why initiations fail

Building mechanism to analyze why did the 9am-5pm office time fail is just an example. Was it that strict checking of attendance that is possible at 10am is, for some unknown reason, not possible at 9am? Was it that the mornings were quite hectic when the office starts at 9:00 am? Well, from organizational point of view, allowing staffs to work one hour more every day would be more productive.

If it were changed for convenience to the customers for paying bills, then the organization could have arranged extra hours for the staffs working in the counter, without affecting the routine of the whole organization.

Getting two days' weekend or not is just the habit for the employees, and so hardly makes any serious issue. However, once a decision has been made & implemented, it would make more sense to analyze and rectify problems, and not to change decisions for the reason that the same half-filled glass of water that was earlier considered "half-full" suddenly turned "half-empty" with the organizational change. It may be that the reasons for change were not explained clearly to the employees.

(c) Financial transparency

The importance of financial regulations in an organization can hardly be underestimated. But, transparency is no less important than regulation.

Let all the staffs of the organization know that they are so good at bargaining that, for example, the



desk & filing cabinet that you have requested was purchased at Rs. 10,000 when the actual price of the same in the market was Rs. 10,500 - thereby saving Rs. 500 of the organization! Similarly, let it be transparent that a particular vehicle of the organization have been utilized and maintained so nicely that it consumes only 70 liters of fuel in a month whereas the other one claims 110 liters a month for comparable usage - thereby saving 40-liters of fuel of the organization!! In the same way, let everybody of the organization know that telecom equipments were procured with more features and better quality than mentioned in the negotiated price tag.

If these could be done, the organization, somehow, shall appreciate the concerned for managing to use the organizational resources to its fullest benefit. No financial activity of a profit oriented organization should go un-compared to with the amount of cost involved.

(d) Sales & Marketing

The difference between 'Sales' and 'Marketing' is comparable to the 'Painter' and an 'Artist'. As a quote from Pablo Picasso, "A painter is a man who paints what sells; an artist, however, is a man who sells what he paints".

In this age of 'Competition', just depending on the sales department to sell anything intended to be sold is not enough. Proper marketing should also consider providing tailored services to the specific needs of customers, such that customers would be able to gratefully acknowledge receiving services what they had demanded for.

(e) Safety & Security

There may be fire detectors on the ceiling, or that the fire-extinguishers are fixed on the walls in the lobby. But, who is taking care of them- regularly? Possibly, those safety devices might have been providing a "false sense of security". As security is not "one time" investment, there should be a dedicated department to oversee all security aspects of the establishment including CCTVs, metal detectors, etc. The transforming organization should also consider modern ways of safeguarding properties of organization and employees from unforeseen hazards and security loopholes.

(f) Customer feedback

Taking feedback from customers through surveys to gain their input on the change process would make them feel part of it. However, they would feel "wasting time" if feedbacks were taken but no implementa-

tions towards that direction are visible in the expected timeframe.

Website is the perfect way to make the customers informed of the changes, but there should as well be some sort of feedback &/or voting service about the changes &/or their suggestions to help the organization serve them better.

If some of your customers complain, consider that as a feedback, and feel blessed that somebody gave you feedback and the opportunity for you to rectify mistakes.

(g) Customer Retention

Customer retention is normally not an issue in monopoly. But, in competitive environment, customer retention is equally important as customer attraction. The present day customers are comparatively more aware both technically and financially than that of the past. Extreme dissatisfaction in price or quality with the present provider may be the reason for them to switch to another provider. Tailored services and personalized delivery of products would help retain customers even if the price tag is a bit higher.

With the ongoing changes, customers would seek improved procedures and ways of doing business with the service provider; and the organization should be all prepared to answer them.

(h) Detailed analysis & rules before launching new services

The public desires to own and use advanced services and value-added services once their basic needs have been met. The first target should be to provide basic services, and in terms of telecommunication services, that is either the conventional wired telephone or the WLL system based telephone line.

Making proper surveys in the target population, and analyzing the data collected would always help to estimate the tentative number of subscribers that are interested for selected services. This should be followed by some rules that have been formulated by some means, for example: (a) actual data analysis, (b) hit-&-trial, (c) hypothetical. All implementations must follow the rule, but in case there should be a variation for some reason, then that should be regarded as an exception. Making rules and trying to follow certain guidelines helps a lot for future implementations and also for making updates &/or modifications.

For example, selling 25,000 Pre-paid mobiles in two days is a 'great' job-no doubt. But, from customer's point of view, is it mandatory that the form submission & SIM distribution should be done on the



same day? Some rules could be made like, out of 50,000 SIMs, first 5,000 will be made available to elder citizens wishing to be a member of the “mobile world”, and then for those people, who can show proof of larger business activity, so on and so forth.

In the absence of such rules, those younger citizens who have time to stand on queue for hours would be able to “play” with mobiles, and unfortunately, those elder citizens who are more responsible to the economic health of the nation but do not have sound health & extra time to stand on the queue for hours would have to wait until the “next lot” would be sold by the incumbent or by the new competitor.

From customer’s point of view, if private airlines could provide discounts to elder citizens for traveling with them, why can NEPAL TELECOM not provide at least a priority for providing them Pre-paid SIM (?) - just priority, and not discount.

(i) “Re-inventing the Wheel”

The general understanding about “research” is that only manufacturing entities need them. This is NOT true! Research actually asks for all systematic investigation to discover facts. In under-developed countries, research actually makes more sense to search for “an appropriate technology” in every field including telecom.

All research, however, must depend on true & uniform data, which would be fed by a central data repository in the organization. The central Monitoring & Evaluation unit then should depend on the data/information from the central repository and publish the analytical reports periodically.

The “synchronized” action of above units (i.e. research, repository & monitoring units) could be possible- for example- with the introduction of a dedicated “Center for Research and Data Repository (CRDR)”, which then would save the transforming organization from “Re-inventing the Wheel”.

(j) Job rotation

If the job is monotonous, challenge-less, & repetitive in nature, then from ‘Operations Management’ point of view, productivity will definitely decrease.

To cope with the negative aspects of “job monotony” (which some call as “specialization”!), may be there should be a regulation - for example-that at least one member of the department must be transferred to another comparable department every year, and no employee should be kept in the same department, same office premise, and with same job responsibilities for more than five years. In addition to the

benefits of job diversity and opportunities to be engaged with different people and places, a sense of togetherness also develops with colleagues in other departments when job rotation is implemented.

The Foresight

NEPAL TELECOM is not only looking towards the direction of change, but it has already taken many right steps for realizing its vision.

With organizational changes, the relationship between the organization and its customers is expected to be so good that they will not use the word “complain” but consider the same as “feedback” or “suggestion”. With availability of broadband services people are expected to be “on-line” most of the time doing work or studying. As such, www.ntc.net.np could be their most trusted site on the Internet to fetch information, and, as well as to lodge complaints (well, “suggestions”) by email or via pop-up windows.

On the other hand, employees would be motivated to the extent that the CCTVs at the entrance to buildings will be busy capturing “coming and going” of the employees a little early and a little late than the official working hours. Everybody would feel responsible not only to finish the jobs assigned, but also to see the results coming out by the expected timeframe.

The employees shall carry Smart ID cards that they just need to insert in the machine at the entrance of the office premise. Machines will do most of the work - recording identities of those staffs staying inside when they were expected to be doing work outside the office premises, and vice versa.

All employees would feel responsible to the “improvement process” because they would all be interested as they would at least have a clear picture on how the other departments execute work; and, that they all have the same values and consider themselves as the vital part of one single big pizza. They will be able to compare and learn more efficient approaches to work as they would have experienced different responsibilities under “job rotation”.

When those urgent actions to face the changed competitive environment are taken care of, it shall not be far away that there will be news on “NEPAL TELECOM AWARDS” to respect the best scholars and the best performers in the field relevant to it. These shall be considered as “investments”, and not as “expenses”.

On the long run, the reputed management books will have “Case Studies” and examples of “The Best Practices” of NEPAL TELECOM, which will set ex-



amples for others to follow.

Although many of those changes will have longer incubation periods to produce favorable results, the general feelings that will grow inside all stakeholders of the organization will indicate the effect of positive changes coming up in the organization.

All these will upgrade the relationship between the organization and its customers, and establish an improved corporate culture.

Guiding remarks to Change

Effective, fair and proactive transition is always advocated for a sustainable organizational

change. Longing for a change might be easier than to change oneself. And, changing oneself might be far easier thing to do than enforcing change to others. Playing a role of a Change Agent may be the simplest & the most effective individual contribution to be a part of the change process. However, we should all be prepared to consider proper remedies to stay guided by perhaps the best statement on “Change” in the words of Emeritus Professor Donald Foster.

**“People don’t resist change;
They resist being changed!”**

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