

Do 70% of organisational change initiatives really fail?

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Eleven managing change conundrums (Hughes, 2010)

- **What does managing change mean?**
- **Is organisational change the only constant?**
- **Does history play a role in managing change?**
- **Is it possible to reconcile the multiple perceptions of organisational change?**

Managing change conundrums (continued)

- **Is there one best way to manage and study change?**
- **Is organisational change manageable?**
- **Who manages change?**
- **Managing change or leading change?**

Managing change conundrums (continued)

- **What is the outcome of managing change?**
- **Is organisational change a ‘thing’ or a ‘process’?**
- **How feasible is it to manage into the future?**

Do 70% of organisational change initiatives really fail?

- **What are the origins and supporting evidence specifically for the 70% organisational change failure rate?**
- **What are the shortcomings of promoting an inherent organisational change failure rate?**

70% change failure rate identified

- **Hammer and Champy (1993)**
- **Beer and Nohria (2000)**
- **Kotter (2008)**
- **Senturia et al (2008)**

Instance One – Hammer and Champy (1993)

- ‘Sadly, we must report that despite the success stories described in previous chapters, many companies that begin reengineering don’t succeed at it...Our unscientific estimate is that as many as 50 percent to 70 percent of the organizations that undertake a reengineering effort do not achieve the dramatic results they intended.’ (Hammer and Champy 1993, p200)**

Instance Two - Beer and Nohria (2000)

- **‘The brutal fact is that about 70% of all change initiatives fail.’ (Beer and Nohria, 2000, p133).**

Instance Three – Kotter (2008)

- **‘From years of study, I estimate today more than 70 per cent of needed change either fails to be launched, even though some people clearly see the need, fails to be completed even though some people exhaust themselves trying, or finishes over budget, late and with initial aspirations unmet.’
(Kotter, 2008, p12/13)**

Instance Four – Senturia et al (2008)

- People have been writing about change management for decades and still the statistics haven't improved. With each survey, 70 per cent of change initiatives still fail – and the world is getting more complicated. (Senturia et al, 2008, p1)**

What are the shortcomings of promoting an inherent organisational change failure rate?

- The ambiguities of organisational change**
- Organisational change as highly context dependent**
- Perceptions of organisational change outcomes**
- Time and organisational change outcomes**
- The measurability of organisational change outcomes**

The ambiguities of organisational change

- Neglects the rich variety of organisational changes which exist
- Privileges espoused change rationales over latent change rationales
- Ignores the unanticipated outcomes of organisational change
- Assumes the influence of a single change initiative can be isolated and evaluated
- Downplays the presence and influence of organisational cultures within organisational change initiatives

Organisational change as highly context dependent

- **Disregards the unique contexts of different change initiatives**
- **Suggests that the espoused American change failure rate is applicable in very different international cultural contexts**

Perceptions of organisational change outcomes

- **Neglects competing internal perceptions of an organisational change**
- **Neglects the ontological and epistemological influences upon evaluation**

Time and organisational change outcomes

- **Assumes that with the right change methodology the failure rate can be reduced and the future can be made certain**
- **Ignores the historiography of change successes and failures**
- **Neglects the dynamic nature of changing and change outcomes**
- **Ignores debates about the sustainability of change initiatives**

The measurability of organisational change outcomes

- **Downplays any form of qualitative evaluation of organisational change**

Conclusion

- **70 % of all organisational change initiatives do not fail.**
- **The belief that any inherent failure or success rate can be attributed collectively to all forms of organisational change is neither valid nor reliable.**

References

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