Creating employee readiness to gain support for change

Cyracus Badinye Bapuuroh

Leeds Beckett University
School of Human Resource Management and Organisational Behaviour
Rose Bowl, Portland Crescent
LS1 3HB Leeds- U.K
Accra Technical University.
School of Business and Management Studies- Marketing Department
P. O. Box 561, Accra -Ghana

Abstract
The purpose of this study is to investigate how employee readiness for change was created during an organizational transformation in the telecommunication industry of Ghana. The research embraced a qualitative multiple case study using two companies. Data was gathered primarily through interviews from twenty employees. Thirteen (13) employees were interviewed from Airtel Ghana Ltd and seven (7) employees were interviewed from MTN Ghana Ltd. Managers and non-managers were the participants for the interviews. Semi-structured interviews were carried out. Thematic analysis was undertaken. It is established that: communication, explaining the need for change, engaging and addressing concerns of staff, reference to success stories, assurance about company's capability, appropriateness of change, and team building were the tools used to create readiness for change. This research has strengthened knowledge in change management in the area of overcoming resistance to change that has been established over the years. This is the first time such a study has been carried out in Ghana especially in the telecommunications industry.

Key Words: Organizational Change, Resistance, Readiness for Change, Telecommunications Industry.

1. Introduction
To compete successfully and be able to survive and progress, organizations do sometimes undertake change (Tushman and O'Reilly, 1996). Related to most changes is the phenomenon of resistance which is a normal and natural response to change. This is because change usually involves moving from the known to the unknown (Coghlan, 1993; Singh et al., 2012). Employee resistance has been seen as the most common issue challenging management during change implementation (Bovey and Hede, 2001). According to Oakland and Tanner (2007), published evaluations of successfully implemented change programmes can be as little as 10 per cent. The low success rates observed in change programmes can be attributed to employee resistance to change (Ijaz and Vitalis, 2011). According to Chawla and Kelloway (2004, 485) resistance is an "adherence to any attitudes or behaviours that thwart organizational change goals". Any sound, well-suggested and implemented change intervention faces eminent failure if resistance is not effectively managed to gain support and acceptance. Cohen (2007) indicated that the greatest solitary risk to successful change in a business is resistance to it on the part of its stakeholders. There is scarcity of research on the management of resistant attitudes and behaviours in the Ghanaian context particularly in the telecommunication industry. The purpose of this study is to investigate how management creates readiness for change during an organizational transformation in the telecommunication industry of Ghana. Gao and Damsgaard (2007), suggest that in recent past, there has been a tremendous change in mobile telecommunications technology and services. However, they observed that research in this area has largely focused on western countries. Then, Boohene and Williams (2012) in their study, recognised the fact that majority of the studies and theories on change idea, performance and management have been embarked

upon in developed countries whereas research on resistance to change in developing countries is non-existent especially in Ghana. It is this gap that the current research seeks to bridge in the area of creating readiness for change. In this study, the researcher empirically examined how management created readiness for change in a very comprehensive manner during the introduction of large-scale changes using two organizations operating in the telecommunications industry of Ghana based on an inductive and a comparative study. The two companies studied are MTN Ghana Ltd and Airtel Ghana Ltd. These two companies control 60.13% of the mobile voice market share in Ghana as at December 2015 (Ghana National Communications Authority Report- December 2015). They are therefore representative of the companies operating in the telecommunications industry of Ghana. The telecommunication industry of Ghana has been transformed from a state monopoly-based organization into an open and competitive market industry. "Reform of Ghana telecommunication sector commenced with the development of the Accelerated Development Plan (ADP) by the Ministry of Transport and Communication in 1994" (Frempong and Atubra, 2001, 198). The deregulation of the telecommunication sector in Ghana has intensified competition leading to a lot of changes being implemented by the various organizations. For instance, MTN Ghana Ltd. went through a change of ownership in 2007 and in 2014, it introduced structural changes that led to both cultural and system changes. It standardised and centralised its operations to that of the MTN group. The transformation objective also included re-organisation, the introduction of new systems and processes and a culture change. In effect, the company has changed the way it does its business by introducing a common set of processes and a common way of working in line with the MTN group. Then Airtel Ghana Ltd., also went through a change of ownership in 2010 and in 2014, there was a change in the leadership of the organisation. The transformation at this point included a culture shift. This was intended to introduce new forms of behaviour such as new values of speed in work and new processes. It introduced a change in the culture of doing business that led to cultural change and attitudinal/behavioural changes with a focus on speeding up business to satisfy the customer. These companies therefore qualify for a case study because they can provide the information necessary to accomplish the purpose of the study. It is based on these changes that the researcher would establish how readiness for change was created.

2. Theoretical Background
2.1 Resistance to Change
Resistance is largely being seen as an adverse or a dysfunctional reaction by subordinates or change recipients to hinder the efforts of change agents to develop an organisation (Dent and Goldberg, 1999). Resistance is therefore being perceived as something that must as an obligation, be managed and overcome in order to take total advantage of the benefits of any change initiative (Atkinson, 2005). Some authors are however of the view that this negative interpretation of RTC is limited as compared with the reality and that resistance could be a neutral process. This implies that overcoming resistance could be good for some purpose and encouraging resistance could also serve some good purpose. They are actually of the view that encouraging or entertaining resistance at the organizational level would usually yield positive results for changes initiated (Ford et al., 2008; Ford and Ford, 2009). However, because resistance arises due to multiplicity of reasons, it is doubtful if there is any one practice that can handle all these reasons (Rollinson, 2008). Various terms and methods have been suggested as useful techniques in combatting resistance to change. Common amongst these methods are overcoming resistance to change and creating employee readiness for change.

2.2 Overcoming Resistance to Change
Various ideas have been suggested as the solution to overcoming employee resistance to change. Amongst them are the following: Organizations serious about a change should exhibit this by constituting a primary group of change agents to lead the change effort. This will indicate the organization's commitment to change and also provide employees with a direct point of communication for exchange of information (Lines et al., 2016). The formation of a team to spearhead a change process is a critical success factor to combating resistance (Nussbaumer and Merkley, 2010; Blackburn, 2014).
Management must demonstrate the capability of undertaking the change to employees. Employees embrace change if they believe they have what it takes to perform their new roles in the change process (Chreim, 2006). Individuals' belief in their ability to perform their jobs satisfactorily during a change, can bolster positive attitude towards change (Kavaliauskaite, 2010).

Communication when undertaken effectively, will eliminate part of the sentiment of uncertainty and lack of information about the change thereby minimising gossip and unjustified fears usually harboured by change recipients (Burnes, 2009; Griffin and Moorhead, 2014) and to provoke the interest for change, the organisation needs to communicate a vision of the future which will be a product of the changes and a constructive message for change and confidence in the change process (Smith, 2005). Knowledge about change received through management communication has the potential to minimize uncertainty and also makes employees feel more prepared and able to undertake the change (Bordia et al., 2004).

Management during a change initiative can also resort to the use of storytelling where references about successes realized by other similar operating organizations who have implemented similar changes are told employees. By making references to these success stories it will be aimed at getting employees to believe that the changes suggested are achievable since those same changes have successfully been implemented elsewhere. This in effect is instilling the can-do spirit into employees. In such circumstances, Bhattacharyya (2014) submits the use of an emotional communication where a narrative in the form of storytelling is used to convince employees about the suitability of implementing such a change.

Kotter and Schlesinger (2008) came up with some six strategies for dealing with resistance to change: (a) Communication and Education- Communicating ideas about change helps organizational members to understand the rationale and essence of a particular change. (b) Participating and Involvement- Participation of organizational members in a change process brings about commitment and compliance. (c) Facilitation and Support- This is most useful in a change process when fear and anxiety is the cause of resistance. Support can be provided in terms of offering training in new skills, listening to employees' problems and offering emotional support. (d) Negotiation and Agreement- This is where incentives are offered to active or potential resisters so as to deal with resistance. (e) Manipulation and Co-optation- Managers will normally use undercover methods to encourage employees through the application of selective information and the intentional organization of events to attain the needed change. (f) Explicit and Implicit Coercion- Here, managers often deal with resistance to change by driving people to accept change by openly or covertly frightening them for instance with the loss of jobs, promotion possibilities and so forth or by actually firing or transferring them.

2.3 Readiness for Change
 By creating readiness for change, it is anticipated that an organization will be able to successfully manage a change initiative.

Creating readiness for change hinges on the perceived need for change. This requires making people so discontented with the current situation such that they are stimulated to attempt new things and ways of behaviour and to overcome resistance to change (Cummings and Worley, 2009). Smith (2005) adds that to be able to thrive, it is crucial for a change to attain thrust and a feeling of urgency. He believes that many change efforts do not succeed due to the fact that very few people in the organization either recognize or accept the longing for change. Creating an identified need for change is thus a critical primary development in any change intervention. Smith (2005) in addition, indicates that by robustly revealing discrepancies between present and desired states, and at the same time conveying trustworthy and practical expectations for realizing change, motivation and readiness for change can be created. Armenakis and Harris (2002) add that readiness is the cognitive precursor to the behaviours of either resistance to, or support for, a change effort. In a similar vein, Holt et al., (2007, 235) define readiness as "reflecting the extent to which an individual or individuals are *cognitively* and *emotionally* inclined to accept, embrace, and adopt a particular plan to purposely alter the status quo". Readiness is probably one of the most critical basics desired for employees' primary backing for a change intervention (Armenakis and Harris, 2002; Armenakis et al., 2007). Readiness which is akin to Lewin's (1951) concept of unfreezing, is echoed in organizational members' beliefs, attitudes and intentions concerning the extent to which changes are required and the organization's capacity to effectively make those changes (Armenakis and Harris, 2002). Kotter (1996), echoed this idea when he said that the most important primary step towards realizing successful organizational change is the establishment of a sense of urgency and a necessity for change. He reasons that the need for urgency will have to be stimulated for the transformation process to succeed. In the words of Kotter:

"*Without a sense of urgency, people won't give that extra effort that is often essential. They won't make needed sacrifices. Instead they cling to the status quo and resist initiatives from above*" (Kotter, 1996, 5).

Armenakis and Harris (2002) suggest that readiness to change may serve to forestall the prospect of resistance to change, and increasing the possibility for change measures to be more effective. They opined that outlining a change project in terms of readiness looks more in agreement with the semblance of proactive managers who undertake the tasks of coaches and supporters of change, rather than those whose duty is to reactively monitor the place of work for signs of resistance. As stated by Smith (2005), building readiness for change requires developing mutual trust and respect between change agents and other organizational members. He believes that by involving organizational members in examining choices and making decisions during a suggested change is one such platform in establishing the basis of trust. Through this, organizational members can be inspired to bear personal responsibility for achieving change. Smith (2005) added that a failure to create change readiness may lead to managers expending considerable amount of time and energy in overcoming resistance to change. Then, Burnes (2009) adds his voice to this by talking about the need for organizations to generate a willingness amongst organizational members for change. He beliefs that in order for an organization to create a willingness for change, a sense of urgency, and a feeling of dissatisfaction with the present, there are some rudimentary four actions an organization needs to consider: (1) Make people aware of the pressures for change; (2) Give regular feedback on the performance of the individual processes and areas of activity; (3) Understand people's fears and concerns and (4) Publicize successful change. Burnes (2009), believes that the publication of positive change programmes stressing on the beneficial effects change can bring to employees can help relieve organizational members of their fears and also generate productive attitude towards change implementation.

The process of change is alleged to be in three phases (Armenakis and Harris, 2002). At the first phase of readiness, organizational members become ready for the change and if possible, become its backers. In the second phase where adoption occurs, this is where the change is executed and organizational members take up the innovative ways of operating. The third phase which encompasses institutionalization involves efforts to preserve the adoption period and strengthen the changes until they become adopted and regular. Armenakis and Harris, 2002 and Armenakis et al., (2007) suggested a framework that an organization can depend on to create readiness for change. They identified two beliefs as the fundamental ingredients of change readiness. These are the beliefs that change is required and that the individual and the organization have the capacity to accomplish the change. According to them, the basic mechanism for creating readiness for change among members of an organization is the *message* for change. The five message issues acknowledged by them for creating readiness for change are Discrepancy, Appropriateness, Efficacy, Principal support, and Personal Valence. They believe that any communication effort during a change process must consists of these constituent elements in order to stimulate constructive thrust for the change process.

The first factor essential for creating readiness for change as suggested by Armenakis et al., (2007) is *discrepancy*. This, they characterized as the difference between the existing state and the anticipated future state. Management of organizations must therefore communicate the existence of any deficiency in the conduct of the organization to be able to create the necessity for changing the current state of affairs. Information must be disseminated to organizational members to let them understand that the current state of affairs must be done away with. This will create the inspiration for them to want to alter the present condition. Explaining the discrepancy that exist in an organization and which needs to be changed creates a positive attitude towards change (Kavaliauskaite, 2010). Establishing and communicating a need to change is one of the first important steps to follow in implementing change (Kotter, 1996; Armenakis and Bedeian, 1999).

The second factor suggested is *appropriateness*. Management must establish clearly that the anticipated change is the correct change to make. Organizational members might appreciate the need for change, but may not be convinced about the particular change recommended by management. The remedy recommended for the current organization's problems must be accepted as appropriate by organizational members for them to consent to (Armenakis et al., 2007; Armenakis and Harris, 2009). In order to get organizational members ready for change, both Armenakis and Harris (2002) and Holt et al., (2007) suggest that a change message must be aimed at getting them convinced about the suitability of that particular change. In establishing if the suggested change is the appropriate one to make, the change leader must demonstrate that the proposed change is the right answer for eliminating the difference between the current and the desired state (Self, 2007). In his study, Abdel-Ghany (2014) observed that the respondents' belief that the mobile extension was necessary and needed was instrumental in creating individual readiness for

change. This supports Holt et al.,'s (2007) work that employees' belief about the appropriateness of the proposed change was instrumental in creating readiness for the change. Perceived appropriateness of change has the capacity to reduce employee resistance to change (Kavaliauskaite, 2010; Mckay et al., 2013).

The third factor is *efficacy*. This is where management will have to build up the confidence of organizational members to reassure them that they have what it takes to undertake the change (Armenakis and Harris, 2002; Armenakis and Harris, 2009). Change leaders will have to build organizational members' confidence that they have the capability to eliminate the discrepancy identified. This will offer the encouragement that will galvanize them to carry on with realizing the desired goal determined by the organization. When employees believe that they have what it takes to perform their new roles in the change process they normally will develop positive attitude towards change (Chreim, 2006; Kavaliauskaite, 2010).

The fourth factor is *principal support*. This involves the organizational support for the change (Armenakis and Harris, 2002; 2009). Organizational members can only be ready and to energetically back a change when there is a robust demonstration of support from change agents (i.e. superiors, peers, etc.) in the form of resources and information (Rafferty et al., 2013) and this adds to the individual's feeling of efficacy about his or her capacity to execute change. An obvious support for and commitment for change by management produces optimistic views about change. Conversely, a lack of noticeable support or inconsistent behaviours on the part of management can bring about a negative perception for change (Covin and Kilmann, 1990). Being visible to find solutions to issues bordering the change process is a manifestation of management's principal support for change and this has the potential to appease employees about the uncertainties that usually surround any change initiative. According to Schultz (2007), communication should be held in an open and reassuring environment where individuals are able to share their anxieties, frustrations, and needs without fear of reprisal. This amounts to providing some principal support as suggested by Armenakis and Harris (2002). In trying to engage employees and find solution to their concerns, Atkinson (2005) advocates for a two-way communication process between change leaders and staff to encourage them to interact and maintain a continuous discourse. In doing this, the emphasis should be on a face-to-face channel and that feedback opportunities should be made available in such interactions.

The fifth and final message component is *personal valence*. During an organizational change, members of the change target are always interested in evaluating the benefits of the proposed change (Armenakis and Harris 2002; Armenakis et al., 2007). If the individual does not have the confidence that the proposed change will offer benefits, then it is not probable that he or she will have a constructive general view of his or her readiness for change (Rafferty et al., 2013). Armenakis and Harris (2002) identified three message conveying strategies which are, *persuasive communication, active participation and managing internal and external information* that change agents could employ to deliver the five components of the message about change and generate readiness for change. Persuasive communication is largely the basis of unambiguous information regarding discrepancy and efficacy. Knowledge about change received through management communication has the power to reduce uncertainty and also makes employees feel more equipped and able to handle the change (Bordia et al., 2004).

Active participation in a change is recommended to help reduce negative attitudes towards transformation and assists change implementers to gain the perspectives of change participants (Lines, 2004; McKay et al., 2013) This type of information is cherished because individuals have the habit of having more confidence in information learned by themselves (Armenakis and Harris, 2002) and the management of information requires using sources both inside and outside of the organization to offer information regarding the change. The news media is one form of external source of information that can perform a critical role in creating readiness for change. Creating readiness is the first step in the implementation of a change process and if properly done, employees should be more willing to support and ultimately adopt the change. However, if this first step is neglected, some employees may actively or passively resist the change initiative (Self and Schraeder, 2009). The research question of relevance is therefore: How do managers create readiness for change to gain the support of employees?

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design: Qualitative Multiple Case-Study

The methodology used in this article is the same methodology that the author had used in another article entitled "Exhibiting Resistance During An Organizational Transformation: The Telecommunications Industry In Ghana". The study adopts a qualitative research strategy based on a multiple case study design.

A multiple case study is suitable for this research due to its investigative nature (Voss et al., 2002) and a qualitative research is very appropriate for a case study research (Ellram et al., 2004).

Qualitative research strategy provides the methods necessary to enable a researcher to try and find out the experiences and practices of major informants and to find them resolutely in context (Devine, 2002). The researcher therefore wanted to obtain at first hand, the opinions and experiences of employees in the telecommunications industry of Ghana, on how management created employee readiness for change during the implementation of transformational programmes undertaken by their organizations. Qualitative data enables a researcher to obtain rich descriptions that are vivid, contained in a real-life context and are truthful (Amaratunga et al., 2002). By using a qualitative method, it enabled the researcher to investigate in-depth, both managers and employees' perspectives on how management created readiness for change in their respective organizations.

A multiple case-study design is adopted for this study because the creation of employee readiness for change is highly contextual. It is therefore important to study in-depth, the phenomenon of readiness for change within the context of the selected telecommunication organizations. A case study research offers a holistic perspective on real-life events and the processes leading to certain results (Vissak, 2010). Moreover, case studies allow researchers to explore or test theories within the context of real life settings (Myers, 2013). Multiple case study design allows the comparison of events and data across cases (Voss et al., 2002).

Two companies, MTN Ghana and Airtel Ghana were studied. MTN Ghana holds 46.43 % of the voice subscriber market share in Ghana whilst Airtel holds 13.70 % (National Communications Authority of Ghana Report, December 2015).

3.2 Data Collection Methods and Techniques

Data was collected primarily through face-to-face interviews with participants. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and this enabled the researcher to obtain subjective but valuable information from participants. Semi-structured interviews are mostly used in qualitative research (Gray, 2007). More so, semi-structured interviews are often the only data source for a qualitative research and are based on open-ended questions (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006) and allows probing questions based on the interchange between the interviewer and the interviewee. Interviews are appropriate when the aim of a research is exploratory and geared towards obtaining the feelings and attitudes of participants (Gray, 2007). The interview schedule was developed based on the purpose of the study. The questions were therefore constructed to depict the essence of the study.

In selecting a sample for a qualitative study, Guest et al., (2006) have endorsed twelve (12) interviews for a researcher who desires to study communal views and experiences amongst a set of individuals who are equally alike. For this study, twenty (20) participants were interviewed.

Seven (7) participants were interviewed from MTN Ghana consisting of 5 managers and 2 other employees and thirteen (13) participants were interviewed from Airtel Ghana consisting of 7 managers and 6 other employees. Purposeful samples were selected from the two companies. Participants selected were those who had experienced organizational transformations for the immediate past and could speak to the research questions of interest and were willing and available to participate in the interviews. The managers interviewed were all middle-level managers. The interviews were conducted in 2015. Interviews mostly lasted between 40 minutes and 1 hour. All interviews were audio recorded.

The researcher also examined company documents in the form of annual reports and newsletters. These documents assisted the researcher in asking probing questions during the interviews.

Table 1: Basic Information of Participants

Participant	Gender	Age Group	Educational Level	Category
P01	Female	30-39	University	Manager
P02	Male	40-49	University	Non manager
P03	Male	30-39	University	Manager
P04	Female	20-29	University	Non manager
P05	Female	20-29	University	Non manager
P06	Male	50 and Above	University	Manager
P07	Female	40-49	University	Manager
P08	Female	30-39	University	Non manager

P09	Male	30-39	University	Manager
P10	Male	30-39	University	Non manager
P11	Male	40-49	University	Manager
P12	Female	20-29	University	Non manager
P13	Male	30-39	University	Manager
P14	Male	50 and Above	University	Manager
P15	Male	30-39	University	Manager
P16	Male	40-49	University	Manager
P17	Male	40-49	University	Manager
P18	Female	20-29	University	Non manager
P19	Male	20-29	University	Non manager
P20	Male	30-39	University	Manager

The information on the table above gives a description of the participants who were interviewed in terms of their gender, age, educational level and the nature of the position held in their organizations.

3.3 Data Analysis
Thematic Analysis was selected as the method of qualitative analysis as it is very flexible and can be used through a host of research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is an analytic method for identifying and analysing patterns in qualitative data (Clarke & Braun, 2013). An inductive thematic analysis was applied. This study implemented the outline offered by Braun and Clarke (2006) for thematic analysis which comprises of some six stages: familiarising yourself with your data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and producing the report.
Data was transcribed into written form before thematic analysis could be carried out. Initial codes were identified from the data from sections of the text that could constitute remarkable patterns. In Vivo coding was undertaken based on meaning units or actual phrases used in the text segments (Thomas, 2003).
 The various codes were sorted out and relevant data extracts were collated to march onto them. The development of these codes, was the researcher's interpretation of what participants had expressed in the interview transcripts. To increase the validity of the research results, data triangulation was done by way of the interviews and the secondary information obtained through the companies' documentations (Voss et al., 2002). The multiple case study design used also ensured external validity (Voss et al., 2002). The credibility of this study is further enhanced based on the exhaustive research design used (Farquhar, 2012). A cross-case analysis was then undertaken based on the factors that constitute the elements of the codes for the two cases.

4. Findings and Discussions
The main purpose of this study is to investigate how managers created readiness for change in the telecommunications industry of Ghana. The following provides the findings pertaining to the research question. Here, extracts relating to the various findings are provided. These two case studies illustrate change management practices with respect to creating employee readiness for change. By using a cross-case analytic framework, the researcher provides an interpretation of the findings by looking at the similarities and differences offered by the findings Idiagbon-Oke and Oke (2011). From the findings, certain factors appear to have emerged across the two organizations. There are however, differences in some situations.

Table 2

Factors	MTN Ghana Ltd.	Airtel Ghana Ltd.
▪ Communication	Y	Y
▪ Need for Change Explained	Y	Y
▪ Engaging and Addressing Concerns of Staff	Y	Y
▪ Reference to Success Stories	Y	Y

▪ Assurance About Company's Capability	Y		N
▪ Appropriateness of Change	Y		N
▪ Team Building	N		Y

Table 2 indicates the factors for Creating Readiness for Change

NB: [1]Y means the factor was used in creating readiness for change

[2]N means the factor was not used for creating readiness for change.

In creating readiness for change, communication, explaining the need for change, engaging staff and addressing their concerns and making references to success stories (which can also be termed as storytelling) came up strongly amongst the two cases as methods used to get employees ready and willing for the changes implemented.

Communication: This was a method applied in the two cases to create readiness for change. Employees were educated to some extent on the changes. In the case of MTN Ghana Ltd., training as a means of educating employees was offered. Various methods were employed just to get the message about change to employees. In Airtel Ghana Ltd., a whole unit was even set up to handle the communication aspect of the change process. The following are illustrative of the communication effort undertaken by the two companies:

"*So a department, a unit was set up to manage this whole transformation through communication. Because a whole unit was set up you know there is going to be transformation. There was a lot of communication for us to move towards that direction*".

"*I think it was the constant communication. So we got constant communication and visits and to let us know that they were part of us. We had staff fora and our questions were answered. Personally they gave us all the information we needed. There were regular communications internally regarding the change*".

This level and amount of communication is what Armenakis and Harris (2002) describe as persuasive communication in order to convey the change message during a transformation. This message helps to reduce uncertainty and equips employees to be able to carry out change (Bordia et al., 2004).

Explaining the need for change: Closely related to communication is the task of explaining to organizational members about the need for the changes. This is what Armenakis and Harris (2002) have described as conveying a message of discrepancy. This is to settle the concern of whether the change is needed or not. The future direction of the organization was given and why the change explained. Explaining the need for change is being illustrated by the following responses from a participants:

"*Emmh top most is the way forward, the business decision in terms of where the business wants to go. So then by giving them the business strategy, you know you are taking over a business and you have your reason for taking over the business. So you explain to them why you want to take over the business and why you want this to be done. So the reason why the change was explained*".

"*Enabling employees to perceive the need for change was about letting employees to understand the benefits of the change and that the benefits far exceed the disadvantages*"

Creating and communicating a need to change is very important in implementing change. People will simply not change if they do not see the need to change. Explaining the discrepancy that exist in an organization and which needs to be changed creates a positive attitude towards change (Kavaliauskaite, 2010).

Engaging and addressing the concerns of staff: Then, the other common factor is about the fact that there was some sort of effort to engage employees and address their concerns about the changes. This, to some extent, bothers on some form of interaction between managers and employees. In both instances, there were meetings held to try and understand the concerns of staff regarding the changes and to find answers to their anxieties. These statements are indicative of the fact that steps were taken to engage employees and to address their concerns regarding the changes initiated:

"*The transformational programme for us in this company starts with serious engagement initially. They came to let people see the need to think that change is about to come. So when you begin now to talk about it, you begin now to say you are going to introduce it then engagement begins seriously there, start by engaging division by division, sometimes section by section, just so you explain in detail to people what it is and then receive their concerns, address the concerns, that can normally happen for some time. It takes time with the engagement before the final introduction happens and even you realised for my experience here,*

when you get into the middle of the engagement by the time that you are introducing the change, people become very comfortable with it. So for this company the level of engagement has been very successful".

"*From the management level we had internal engagements with all stakeholders, because the department is not run solely on its own. We had workshops, we had the whole division coming together. So we sat down and we saw the new structure, the benefits that we will gain if we should adopt the system. So as things were unfolded to us we saw that the benefits outweighed the disadvantages*".

Being present to answer questions about a proposed change initiative exhibits an aspect of that principal support needed for change. According to Schultz (2007), communication should be done in an open and supportive manner where individuals are given the chance to discuss their anxieties, frustrations, and needs without fear of punishment.

References to success stories: Management in both cases resorted to the use of storytelling where references about successes achieved by other operating companies in other countries were made to employees. The can-do spirit was therefore instilled into the employees of both cases. The following statements reveal that stories about successful implementation of similar changes were told to convince employees that it was necessary to undertake the changes:

"*O.k emmh the new parent company that is taking over had embarked on such transformation programmes in other countries which have been successful. There was evidence to show when they took over, the introduction of the programme, the results before and after. So these were some of the things that were shared with them to tell them that, look this has been done in other countries and it did work and with this evidence it was important or clear to us that when we also embark on such a programme, the desired results will definitely be achieved. So we gave them evidence of what had happened in other countries to convince them*".

"*We referred them to how other Operating countries have benefitted from this transformational change*".

To curtail the possibility of a negative reaction Armenakis and Harris (2002) propose that a change leader must build the confidence of organizational members emphasising that they are capable of making the change. This is what they refer to as efficacy. The publication of positive change interventions emphasising the fruitful effects change can have for employees can help minimize the fears of organizational members and also breed constructive attitude towards change. In such situations, Bhattacharyya (2014) suggests that one must use an emotional communication where a narrative in terms of storytelling is used.

There were however, some differences observed in the two cases.

Assurance about company's capability: The differences in terms of creating readiness occurred in the case of MTN Ghana, where employees were assured of the company's capability to undertake the changes and some modelling was undertaken to demonstrate the appropriateness or suitability of the changes to employees. To assure employees about the company's capability to undertake the changes, management of MTN Ghana put in place policies, procedures and relevant structures to facilitate the implementation of the changes. These statements are illustrative of the assurances that were given to employees of MTN Ghana:

"*In the first place, the structures that we have in place have given employees the confidence that whatever change that we intend having, because even before the change, you begin to work on policies and procedures that will give you some level of comfort with the existing structure that you have that can contain what change you are bringing on board and all that normally will come during the engagement*".

"*The acquirer, MTN went through series of presentations to ensure the roadmap of the new acquisition is well communicated and understood and to assure employees of its success*"

When employees believe that they have what it takes to perform their new roles in the change process, they normally will develop positive attitude towards change (Chreim, 2006; Kavaliauskaite, 2010).

Appropriateness of change: Then also, to assure employees about the suitability of the changes, management of MTN resorted to the use of modelling the change situation to illustrate the benefits and impact of the changes on both employees and the company. In order to get organizational members ready for change, both Armenakis and Harris (2002) and Holt et al., (2007) suggest that a change message must be aimed at getting them convinced about the suitability of that particular change. These statements demonstrate management's effort at establishing the appropriateness of the changes initiated.

"*Engagement, modelling the benefits of the change programme to the company and to the employees. Transparently presenting what is in there, who will be affected, who will not be affected. If you are affected, what are the benefits that you are going to get etc, all were presented to employees just so you can get the buy in. So even if those who probably will be affected, because if you are going to implement a project here*

that will cost a whole division, department to be taken off, then some people will be affected, but through engagement transparently, eventually people take comfort".

"*People understood what the change was about and did away with their old mind-set about the change. They understood and bought into the idea and this facilitated the implementation of the change*"

In determining the appropriateness of the proposed change, the change leader must establish that the proposed change is the solution to the current state of affairs. In his study, Abdel-Ghany (2014) observed that the respondents' belief that the change was required, facilitated the individual readiness for change. This gives credence to Holt et al.,'s (2007) work that employees' belief about the appropriateness of the proposed change was instrumental in creating readiness for change. The seeming appropriateness of change has the tendency to minimize employee resistance to change (Kavaliauskaite, 2010; Mckay et al., 2013).

Team building: Then, in the case of Airtel Ghana, as a step to getting staff ready for change implementation, some teams were set up to help with the implementation process. A whole unit was set up to spearhead the communication aspect of the change. Cross-functional teams involving a broad range of individuals were also set up to ensure the smooth implementation of the changes. These statements show that as part of effort to get employees ready and willing for the change effort, some teams were set up to spearhead this effort.

"*Direct training no but we have new ways of working. We had cross-functional teams that were set up and we were taken through certain models to ensure that the whole change process is implemented effectively. We had change agents that were chosen across all cross-functions to drive this change and the company agenda within their teams which I was one for enterprise*".

"*Yes, normally what happens is that we form a committee, you have committees that involve or have membership of all divisions and the key areas affected including the local staff Union, no matter what somebody will be there. So that is what happens. We have committees that bring on board representations from divisions, from the union and HR*"

Kotter (1996), believes that to be able to effectively implement a change, change leaders must create what he terms a strong guiding coalition. Organizations serious about a change should exhibit this by constituting a primary group of change agents to lead the change effort. This will indicate the organization's commitment to change and also provide employees with a direct point of communication for exchange of information (Lines et al., 2016). The formation of a team to spearhead a change process is a critical success factor (Blackburn, 2014).

5. Conclusion

Creating readiness for change is close to building an emotional entitlement and commitment for a change project and if this is successfully done, it has the tendency to collapse barriers for a successful implementation of a change. It is obvious from the findings that both organizations took some steps to create employee readiness for change. This probably explains why the various changes were successfully implemented. In some situations, both organizations undertook similar steps in creating readiness for change and in some other situations the two organizations applied different methods in order to create readiness for change. To a very large extent, the various measures adopted by the two companies to create readiness for change highlight the significance of communicating with employees throughout the entire process of change. The findings from this study have confirmed what exist in current literature.

6. Limitations

This study was limited to only two organizations in the telecommunications industry in Ghana. This however, does not in any way water down the strength of the findings in the telecommunications industry since the two organizations are representative of the companies operating in that industry.

Using a case study method in this study suggests that the researcher just looked at the data within the context of the two organizations. This means that it is only suitable to generalize the findings of this study from the two cases to the broader theory. The findings cannot also be applied to other industries except the telecommunications industry of Ghana.

The purposive sample used for this study could introduce a bias into the data collected for this study since those chosen for the interviews could be the ones who have experienced several changes in their various organizations and are therefore familiar with the way changes are implemented.

7. Managerial Implications

The implication of the findings in this study is that if managers or change leaders should effectively implement these change readiness factors, they would be able to gain the support of employees for the successful implementation of changes.

Managers need a very elaborate plan of action to deliberately create employee readiness for change during the implementation of change programmes. In particular, communication would have to be undertaken in varied forms just to unfreeze the existing situations of organizations for effective implementation of change. Failure to create readiness for change can delay the implementation of a change project or even frustrate the whole change effort.

8. Contribution to Knowledge

This research is probably the first of its kind that examined how managers in the telecommunications industry in Ghana created employee readiness for change during an organizational transformation. This study therefore contributes to literature by exposing how managers created employee readiness for change in a developing country such as Ghana.

9. Future Research

Similar research could be undertaken by other researchers to either confirm the findings of this study or expand the findings since this is the first of its kind undertaken in Ghana. Further research could be conducted to cover the other companies operating in the telecommunications industry in Ghana. It should also be possible for research to be conducted on the creation of readiness for change to cover other industries apart from the telecommunications industry in Ghana.

References

[1]   Abdel-Ghany, M.M.M. 2014. "Readiness for Change, Change Beliefs and Resistance to Change of Extension Personnel in the New Valley Governorate About Mobile Extension". *Annals of Agricultural Science*, 59(2): 297-303.

[2]   Amaratunga, D., D, Baldry., M, Sarshar., and R, Newton. 2002. "Quantitative and Qualitative Research in The Built Environment: Application of "Mixed" Research Approach". *Work Study*, 51(1), 17-31.

[3]   Armenakis, A.A. and A.G, Bedeian. 1999. "Organisational Change: A Review of Theory and Research in the 1990s". *Journal of Management*, 25(3), 293-315.

[4]   Armenakis, A.A., J.B, Bernerth., J.P, Pitts and H.J, Walker.2007. "Organizational Change Recipients' Belief Scale: Development of an Assessment Instrument". *The Journal of Applied Behavioural Science*, 43 (4), December, 481-505. DOI: 10.1177/0021886307303654.

[5]   Armenakis, A.A. and S.G, Harris. 2002. "Crafting a change message to create transformational readiness). *Journal of Organisational Change Management*, 15(2), 169-183.

[6]   Armenakis, A.A. and S.G. Harris.2009. "Reflections: Our Journey in Organisational Change Research and Practice". *Journal of Change Management*, 9(2), 127-142. DOI: 10.1080/14697010902879079.

[7]   Atkinson, P. (2005) Managing Resistance to Change. *Management Services*, Spring, pp.14-19.

[8]   Bhattacharrya, D.K. 2014. "Making Change with a Time-Tested Organic Model". *Compensation and Benefits Review*, 45(6), 340-349.

[9]   Blackburn, G. 2014. "Elements of Successful Change: The Service Tasmanian Experience to Public Sector Reform". *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 73 (1), 103-114.

[10]   Boohene, R. and A.A. Williams. 2012. "Resistance to Organisational Change: A case study of Oti Yeboah Complex Limited". *International Business and Management*, 4(1), 135-145.

[11]   Bordia, P., E. Hobman., E. Jones., C. Gallois and V.J. Callan. 2004 "Uncertainties During Organisational Change: Types, Consequences, and Management Strategies". *Journal of Business Psychology*, 18(4), 507-532.

[12]   Bovey, W.H. and A. Hede. 2001. "Resistance to organisational change: the role of cognitive and affective process". *Leadership and Organisational Development Journal*, 22, 372-381.

[13]   Braun, V. and V. Clarke. 2006. "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology". *Qualitative research in Psychology*, 3, 77-101.

[14]   Burnes, B. (2009) *Managing Change*. Harlow: Prentice Hall/Financial Times.

[15] Chawla, A. and E.K, Kelloway. 2004 "Predicting Openness and Commitment to Change". *Leadership and Organisation Development Journal*, 25 (5/6), 485-498.

[16] Chreim, S. 2006. "Managerial Frames and Institutional Discourses of Change: Employee Appropriation and Resistance". *Organisational Studies*, 27(9), 1261-1287.

[17] Clarke, V. and V. Braun. 2013. "Teaching Thematic Analysis: Overcoming Challenges and Developing Strategies for Effective Learning". *The Psychologist*, 26(2), 120-123.

[18] Coghlan, D. 1993. "A person-centred approach to dealing with resistance to change". *Leadership and Organisation Development Journal*, 14(4), 10-44.

[19] Cohen, G. 2007. "The Tower of Babel and the Rally Driver: Understanding and Negotiating Through Resistance to Organisational Change". *Journal of Practical Consulting*, 1(2), 56-63.

[20] Covin, T.J. and R.H. Kilmann.1990. "Participant perception of positive and negative influences on large-scale change". *Group and Organisational studies*, 15, 233-248.

[21] Cummings, T.G. and C.G. Worley. 2009. *Organisational Development and Change*. USA:South-Western Cengage Learning.

[22] Dent, E.B. and S.G. Goldberg. 1999 "Challenging Resistance to Change". *Journal of Applied Behavioural Science*, 35(1), 25-41.

[23] Devine, F. (2002) *Qualitative Methods*. In: Marsh, D. and Stoker, G. (eds.) Theory and Methods in Political Science (2nd ed.), 197. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

[24] DiCicco-Bloom, B. and B.F. Crabtree. 2006. "The Qualitative Research Interview". *Medical Education*, 40, 314-321.

[25] Ellram, L.M., W.L. Tate and C. Billington. 2004. "Understanding and Managing the Services Supply Chain". *Journal of Supply Chain Management*, 40(4), 17-32.

[26] Farquhar, J.W. 2012 *Case Study Research for Business*. London: Sage Publications.

[27] Ford, J.A and Ford, L.W. (2009) Decoding Resistance to Change. *Harvard Business Review*, April, pp.2-6.

[28] Ford, J.D. Ford, L.M. and D'Amelio, A. (2008) Resistance to Change: The Rest of The Story. *Academy of Management Review*, 33(2), pp.362-377.

[29] Frempong, K. and W.H. Atubra. 2001. "Liberalisation of Telecoms: the Ghanaian experience". *Telecommunications Policy*, 25(3), 197-210.

[30] Gao, P. and J. Damsgaard. 2007. "A Framework for Understanding Mobile Telecommunications Market Innovation: A Case of China". *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research*, 8(3), 184-195.

[31] Government of Ghana's National Communications Policy. 2005.

[32] Gray, D. E. 2007. *Doing Research in the Real World*. London: Sage Publications.

[33] Griffin, R.W. and Moorhead, G. (2014) *Organisational Behaviour: Managing People and Organisations*. U.S.A; South-Western.

[34] Guest, G., A. Bunce and L. Johnson. 2006. "How many interviews are enough?: An experiment with data saturation and variability". *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59-82.

[35] Holt, D.T., A.A. Armenakis., H.S. Field and S.G. Harris. 2007 "Readiness for Organisational Change: The Systematic Development of a Scale". *Journal of Applied Behavioural Science*, 43, 232-255.

[36] Idiagbon-Oke, M. and A. Oke. 2011 "Implementing innovative flexible work practices in Nigerian local firms: Implications for management of change in less-developed countries". *Journal of occupational and organisational psychology*, 84, 518-543.

[37] Ijaz, S. And Vitalis, A. (2011) Resistance to Organisational Change: Putting the Jigsaw Together. *International Review of Business Research Papers*, 7(3), pp.112-121.

[38] Kavaliauskaite, V. 2010. "Main Factors Influencing Individual Readiness for Contracting in Municipalities". *Socialiniai Mokslai*, 3(69), 79-86.

[39] Kotter, J.P. 1996. *Leading Change*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

[40] Kotter, J.P. and Schlesinger, L.A. (2008) Choosing Strategies for Change. *Harvard Business Review*, July-August, pp.130-138.

[41] Lewin, K. 1951. *Field Theory in Social Science- Selected Theoretical Papers*. New York (NY): Harper and Row.

[42] Lines, R. (2004) Influence of Participation in Strategic Change: Resistance, Organisational Commitment and Organisational Goal Achievement. *Journal of change management,* 4(3), Pp.193-215.

[43] Lines, B.C., K.T. Sullivan and A. Wiezel. 2016. "Support for Organisational Change: Change-Readiness Outcomes among AEC Project Teams". *Journal of Construction Engineering and Management*, 142(2), 1-11.

[44] Mckay, K., J.R.C. Kuntz and K. Naswall .2013. "The Effect of Affective Commitment, Communication and Participation on Resistance to Change: The Role of Change Readiness". *New Zealand Journal of Psychology*, 42(2), 29-40.

[45] Myers, M.D. 2013 *Qualitative Research in Business and Management*. London: Sage.

[46] Nussbaumer, A and Merkley, W (2010) The Path of Transformational Change. *Library Management*, 31 (8/9), pp.678-689.

[47] Oakland, J.S. and Tanner, S.J. (2007) A New Framework for Managing Change. *The TQM Magazine*, 19(16), pp. 572-589.

[48] Rafferty, A.E., N.L. Jimmieson and A.A. Armenakis. 2013. "Change Readiness: A Multilevel Review". *Journal of Management*, 39(1), 110-135.

[49] Schultz, J.R. 2007 "Eight Steps to Sustain Change" *Quality Progress*, 40(11), 25-31.

[50] Self, D.R. 2007. "Organisational Change- Overcoming Resistance by Creating Readiness". *Emerald Group Publishing Limited*, 21(5), 11-13.

[51] Self, D.R. and M. Schraeder. 2009 "Enhancing the Success of Organisational Change: Matching Readiness Strategies with Sources of Resistance". *Leadership and Organisational Development*, 30(2), 167-182.

[52] Singh, K., M. Saeed and A. Bertsch. 2012. "Key factors influencing employee response toward change: A test in the telecommunications industry in India". *Journal of Management Policy and Practice*, 13(3), 66-81.

[53] Smith, I. 2005. "Achieving readiness for organisational change". *Library Management,* 26(6/7), 408-412.

[54] Thomas, D.R. (2003) A General Inductive Approach for Qualitative Data Analysis. School of Population Health- University of Auckland, New Zealand. [Online] Available: http://www.frankumstein.com/PDF/.../Inductive%20content%20Analysis.pdf (August, 2015)

[55] Tushman, M.L. and C.A. O'reilly. 1996. "Ambidextrous Organisations: Managing Evolutionary and Revolutionary Change". *California Management Review*, 38(4), 8-30.

[56] Vissak, T. 2010 "Recommendations for Using the Case Study Method in International Business Research". *The Qualitative Report*, 15(2), March, 370-388.

[57] Voss, C., N. Tsikriktsis and M. Frohlick. 2002. "Case Research in Operations Management". *International Journal of Operations and Production Management*, 22(2), 195-219.