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**Taking the step from design and planning to implementation
and execution in organizational change.**

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Table of contents

<i>Previous research</i> _____	6
<i>Two different kind of organizations</i> _____	6
<i>Technical rational perspective, Humanistic perspective, Situational perspective</i>	
<i>Two different ways to bring about change</i> _____	7
<i>Programmatic strategy, Learning strategy, Combined strategy</i>	
<i>Diagnose of change prerequisites</i> _____	8
<i>Participation</i> _____	9
<i>The creation of permanent changes</i> _____	10
<i>Unfreezing</i> _____	11
<i>Destabilize old patterns, Vision and mobilize, Move people</i>	
<i>Moving</i> _____	12
<i>Analyze, handle and steer, Manage transition, Change people, Participation</i>	
<i>Refreezing</i> _____	15
<i>Continuous perspective, Adjust organization</i>	
Method	16
<i>Informants</i> _____	16
<i>Instruments</i> _____	16
<i>Procedure</i> _____	17
<i>Design</i> _____	18

	Result	19
<i>Interviews</i>	_____	19
<i>Unfreezing</i>	_____	19
<i>Communication, Participation, People, Managers</i>		
<i>Moving</i>	_____	21
<i>Communication, Learning, Steering, Structure</i>		
<i>Refreezing</i>	_____	23
<i>Processes, Objectives, Training, Criticism</i>		
	Discussion	24
<i>Core strategies</i>	_____	24
<i>Cycle of learning, Information, Communication, Participation</i>		
<i>Diagnosing organizations</i>	_____	26
<i>First level, Third level, Fifth level, This research</i>		
<i>Perspectives</i>	_____	27
<i>Strategic, Middle, Operative, Demarcation</i>		
<i>Lewin</i>	_____	28
<i>Unplanned change, Democracy, Remaining criticism</i>		
<i>Strength and weaknesses of this research</i>	_____	29
<i>Further research</i>	_____	30
	References	31

Taking the step from design and planning to implementation and execution in organizational change.

Micael Litzell

Summary. The question answered is: How do we take the step from design and planning to implementation and execution? The purpose of this research was to try to catch the knowledge and experience that change agents in AB VOLVO possesses and put it in relation with known scientific theories of organizational change. The research design has been a case study. Data to this research has been gathered through interviews. The interviewees' educational status ranged from high school to university degree. Current position ranged from Human resource work in general to Sr. VP HR Business Office. The complete essay mirrors different perspectives of change. The impression is that organizational change can be built around a fundamental strategy of information, communication and participation.

The Human Resource organization in AB VOLVO is at the present time entering a transformation process Human Resource Transformation (HRT), which comprises the complete global HR-organization and includes companies like Renault and Mack, which are now a part of AB VOLVO. The main purpose of the transformation process is to harmonize systems, policies, processes and tools to create a common platform and standard within AB VOLVO for how the HR-work is done. Today the HR-work is diversified and run as each subsidiary company within AB VOLVO see fit. There are today no manuals in common to describe how the HR-work is carried out. HR-professionals are highly adaptable to ever changing circumstances and solve problems as they occur. Besides a more efficient work output the project-organization of HRT see possibilities for cost rationalizations in this change of the HR-organization. The HRT change is considered to be very difficult to accomplish by those HR-employees who are involved in the process (Selling personal communication 2004-10). HRT started as a top-down driven change process, as it is thought up and planned by management and leaving the employees out during this part of the change process. This resulting in employees finding themselves in an ambiguous situation where they do not know how the future will unfold and at the same time the safe ground of the old ways is taken away. This while management is taking everything for granted since they know exactly how things are to be run.

The main question to answer assigned to the author by A. Selling for AB VOLVO is: How do we take the step from design and planning to implementation and execution? The purpose of this research is to try to catch the knowledge and experience that HR change agents in AB VOLVO possesses and put it in relation with known scientific theories of organizational change. It aims to generate ideas of how to analyze and manage change at a strategic level and thereby answering the question assigned.

Previous research

Since HRT started as a top-down change the perspective of this work is top-down, or to use the words of Lewin -planned change. First out in this section is a presentation of two diametrical archetypes of organizations and strategies that can be used when entering a change. Since they are archetypes it is possible to combine them according to circumstances at hand. The change agent may choose to use parts of the archetypes thus creating his or her own model. Next follows a model for diagnosing the organization and by this diagnose be better able to choose the appropriate change model to be used. Last there is a presentation of research made on organizational change and participation. The overview is presented to provide the reader with an essential understanding of conditions of change, which is needed in order to make an independent analyze of the material presented later on in the essay. The argument is that there is no single best practice change model that fits all changes; but there is a best model for each and every change alone.

Two different kind of organizations

A technical rational perspective. The technical rational perspective holds the assumption that organized activity is the tool for the organizer to realize his or her goals and objectives. Thus the goals and objectives of the organizer are the best way to govern and explain events occurring in an organization

This view also holds the assumption that management is fully capable of shaping the organization in line with goals and objectives set up. This assumption leads to a high degree of both vertical and horizontal split and distribution of work on many hands. There will be strict hierarchy and centralization of authority and decision-making. Management is supposed to have the freedom to shape the organization as they see fit without hindrance. This is done through strategies and programs, which are centrally developed and imposed on the employees without any of their participation in the development process necessary.

This means an organization, which emphasizes systems for planning, decision and control. To bring about change in such an organization is then a matter of decisive decision-making and an effective administration (Ellström, 1992).

A humanistic perspective. The humanistic perspective holds the assumption that cooperation and mutual adjustment between man and organization is necessary to maintain a high degree of long-term effectiveness. Effectiveness is defined as the ability to learn and adjust in response to internal and external changes.

This view assumes an organizational evolution through gradual changes in accommodation to changing circumstances within the organization and in the surrounding environment. This organization emphasizes fluid communication, consensus in values and objectives, openness and trust in organizational life. The employees should be flexible and have a mind which is problem solving oriented. To get the learning man and organization, education and training is all-important and the employee's competence is an essential resource. Leadership, team spirit, culture and communication are the primary target for educational investments.

Learning (*change, author*) is a process of problem solving aided by a dialogue between the teacher and those learning. Those learning investigate and try out varying solutions to a problematic situation (Ellström, 1992).

Situational perspective. Neither the organic (*humanistic, author*) nor the mechanistic (*technical rational, author*) organization should in a universal perspective be considered to be the superior organization. Each of them is superior in their own environment. The mechanistic organization is highly efficient in stable surroundings. As it is working by standardized operations it is capable of optimizing work output and minimizing costs thus maximizing profit. This advantage is lost though in surroundings that rapidly and repeatedly changes and put demands on the organization to adjust accordingly. In this environment it is the organic organization that is superior. The flexibility that comes from an organic organization, which is able to constantly and automatically adjust, is what the ever-changing environment requires (Jo Hatch, 2002).

Two different ways to bring about change

Programmatic strategy. Characteristic for the programmatic strategy is that it focuses on the different positions of change. Change is a journey between these different positions, which is to be controlled in every aspect through careful planning and steering of the process. Deviations from the planned process are considered as annoying incidents that should be corrected and steered back to plan. Another characteristic of this strategy is that it often seeks to copy other companies' successful solutions and methods. This may be interpreted as a way to avoid insecurity by using methods and solutions that are proven. The change process often begins with top-management decisions about vision, objectives and allocation of resources. These decisions are often aided by consultants and staff personnel developing action plans and working out details of how to execute the change (Norrgrén, 1995).

Learning strategy. Characteristic for this strategy is that the employees are supposed to gather experience and learn from the change process itself. If an organization as a competitive advantage is to continuously adjust to changing circumstances in its surrounding environment, then the employees need to learn how to handle change and acquire a sense of confidence being in a change process. Management develops a vision and objectives to be achieved striving to involve the rest of the employees in this process. Planning and execution of a change is something that evolves through a continuous discussion involving the whole organization. There is from start a broad participation in the problem analyze and the generation of possible solutions to these problems. This gives employees a wider understanding of the organization, business and where the company is heading. An important part of the change work is to connect the change to the company's competitive environment. This is achieved by encouraging employees to make contact and communicate with external stakeholders. Change agents guide employees through the change and act as speaking partners in a change dialogue (Norrgrén, 1995).

Combined strategy. The top-down change (*programmatic strategy, author*) promises a speedy change journey towards a perfect end state. Managers are able to lead the em-

ployees and steer them in the desired direction. However the chosen solution may not include employee knowledge of how the current organization is run, and commitment to the new organization may be low (Beer, Eisenstat & Spector, 1990b). The problem with the programmatic strategy is that top management, staff and consultants tend to do all planning, development and problem solving work leaving nothing of this process to those who are to implement and execute the change. Middle and operative management and personnel thereby loses the opportunity to engage and contribute in this process, and they never achieve an understanding of why the change is necessary. The change then becomes something imposed from above, making the rest of the employees passive recipients of new terms for how to perform work (Norrgrén, 1995).

The bottom-up change (*learning strategy, author*) may be ill suited to respond to business demands in short term. This strategy seems to solve the problems of the top-down strategy but you might be presented with other kinds of problems. It may be slow to react on demands coming from above. Top-managers are presented the problem of how to have their knowledge and perspective incorporated into new solutions. Managers, unions and workers may cause the downfall of participative approaches if they are resistant to change (Beer et al., 1990b). Having many people involved may lead to endless discussions and compromises without any substance. Management, staff, consultants and leaders need to continuously remind employees that the change is to lead to improved competitiveness (Norrgrén, 1995).

Choosing one alternative over the other will not lead to effective change. The effective change is achieved when managers are combining the top-down with the bottom-up approach and minimizing the disadvantages of both models. The successful change combines and integrates both the hard and the soft approaches (Beer et al., 1990b).

Diagnose of change prerequisites

Organizations need to seek the appropriate model for their own change and avoid looking for the one best practice. The model chosen should be suited to: the type of change about to be undertaken, and the organizational environment and surroundings (Burnes, 2004a). Håkansson has developed a theoretical model with five levels (below), which can be used to analyze an organization in change and help explain development and stagnation during the change. The model is a guide to analyze and how to successfully manage the process of change. A change carried out in accordance to the ability of the organization will give the best result (Håkansson, 1991).

The first level is characterized by a stable and none changing organization in which it is difficult to work with development. In order for development to occur there is a need for an insight that development is necessary. This may start by holding conferences on the subject to reach all people concerned and work in project groups for further processing of chosen issues. All-important is the building of change process knowledge and that the activities result in a consensus around issues worth further elaborating.

In the second level there is a deeper analyze of needs for change and of opportunities for development that are open. Help from expertise might be needed at this stage. In order to evolve to the next level there is a need to get started with a concrete project and set up goals and objectives for the work. The important thing here is to get something started, not to make it big.

In the third level there is a project working on the task to solve problems as defined. This might be a small peripheral project or just aiming to solve a single issue, but it is important that it survives in order for the organization to move to the next level. A survival means a new view where the organization is holding development as an important task alongside the production. Resources need to be available to keep projects running.

The fourth level means that change on a single issue often leads to the need of change in other aspects of organizational life. Soon the organization will have several development projects running simultaneously, the projects themselves are the source for change. Company internal communication is essential at this stage. The dialogue is the engine, which keeps the development work in progress, and it consumes resources. To keep this level there is a need to exchange experiences between project groups and for others to share these experiences. The organization is beginning to view development as a primary activity.

The fifth level holds a fluid internal communication with project groups exchanging experiences. The organization has come to learn and develop from experience and development has high priority. The organization is automatically able to adjust to both internal and external changing circumstances it has become organic. This phase requires resources to be permanently relocated from production to both projects and the necessary dialogue and discussion needed to spread experience and knowledge gathered throughout the organization (Håkansson, 1991).

Participation

Participation in planning and implementation of change tends to motivate people, build ownership of the change and reduce resistance; this is one of the most persistent results coming from organizational research. The change management secret is to capture employees' commitment through involvement and participation. Participation brings new ideas, put peoples competence in use, improves the performance of the organization and link people to problems and their solutions. Bring to the employees the feeling of being masters of their faith, not bystanders (Orgland, 1997).

Coch and French Jr. carried out an experiment in 1947 according to ideas of Lewin. The investigation would have three different groups go through a change with three different levels of workers participation in working out details of the new jobs. The first group did not participate in any way and was simply told by management what to do. The second group had representatives appointed who met with management to consider problems created by the change. In the third group all members were invited to take an active part in detailed discussions of all aspects of the change with management.

In the first group production went down by 20 percent immediately and never was recovered. 9 percent of the workers quit their jobs. There was hostility against the supervisor, slowdowns, complaints and aggressive behavior. In the second group production was recovered to pre change levels within two weeks. There was an attitude of cooperation and no one quit his or her job. In the third group production was recovered in two days and steadily rose to a 14 percent above previous level. No one quit their jobs; there were no signs of aggression and the group worked well with their supervisors.

The conclusion of the experiment was that the recovery of production would be proportional to the amount of workers participation and the amount of aggression would in the same way be inversely proportional (Marrow, 1969). Participation in decision-

making mediates and leads to a decrease in psychological strain linked to structural and job related uncertainty during change. It is suggested that the damaging effects of change related uncertainty can be by-passed by giving the employees a sense of control by letting them have their say in the change process (Bordia, Hobman, Jones, Gallois & Callan, 2004). When directly participating in implementing change there is an increase in organizational attitudes and perception of influence on decision-making compared to those only indirectly participating (Nurick, 1982). Organizational change, participation and uncertainty have a significant bearing on individual feelings of alienation. Participation, especially in strategic decisions but also in routine decisions, has a significant impact on these feelings (Zeffane & McDonald, 1993).

The creation of permanent changes

Lewin's model has dominated change management theories for more than forty years. The past twenty years it has been criticized for: being top-down driven; assuming a stable organizational setting; being suitable only for small organizations; and ignoring organizational politics. Lewin is still relevant to the modern world the argument goes rather than being outmoded (Burnes, 2004b). From diverse and seemingly unrelated disciplines models describing the change process has been gathered and analyzed. In tracing their origin it was found that a majority of the models were following Lewin's three-stage model (Elrod & Tippet 2002). Many people in industry may not have read Lewin or heard of his name, but the views that enlightened executives express can clearly be traced back to his ideas (Marrow, 1969).

In this part of the essay the author has taken the liberty to breakdown the results from three earlier researches made on change management and sort it into Lewin's three-stage model of change. The three researches' results are so-called grounded theories meaning that they are conclusions made from empirical research; Lewin's theory is derived from theoretical reasoning and experiments. The words keys and actions are used and refer to portions of information served by respective group of authors in this part of the essay. The breakdown and sorting of the grounded theories are done without violating the laws under which they function; these laws are presented next.

Each key is necessary for business transformation, leaving any of them out will create problems; leaving several of them out will cause the process to fail. The keys must be applied continuously throughout the change process; during certain phases some keys are more active than others (Pendlebury, Grouard & Meston, 1998). It is a master list and at times some actions will be more appropriate than others. A diagnose of a change should include which action steps to be used and in which order. Since no change process is identical to another the keys are to be used in a flexible manner adjusted to actual circumstances. The keys are interdependent of each other; it is the combined action of them that produces change (Nadler & Nadler, 1998). The *critical path* describes a sequence of actions, which is designed to accomplish the [task-aligned] change. The *critical path* creates a cycle of self-reinforcement and is to be followed in the presented sequence order and with timing (Beer, Eisenstat & Spector, 1990a). In order to bring about a successful change of a group's performance the change must go through three stages as follows: *unfreezing* of the present level of performance should it be necessary; *moving* the group to a new level of performance; *freezing* the group on the new level of

performance (Lewin, 1952). This part of the essay is provided to mirror the interviews' result of this research presented later on.

Unfreezing

Destabilize old patterns. A shell of complacency and self-righteousness may shelter the group and adding forces to a social force field working to maintain status quo. Sometimes it is necessary to deliberately bring about an emotional stir up in order to break up the forces working to maintain the present level of performance. It seems like a process of [catharsis] is needed before it is possible to remove a group's prejudices (Lewin, 1952). Have people dissatisfied with the current state. People will not accept and commit to change until the current situation has become unacceptable. The essential job for a change leader is to make sure that people understand the necessity of leaving the current state (Nadler & Nadler, 1998). The key is to create dissatisfaction with the existing situation, which in turn creates anxiety and a need for change. The response to this need is to choose improvements in line with the vision of the new organization. This kind of mobilizing is necessary throughout the change process; a less intense force is needed though to keep the change moving than the initial substantial force needed to get the change in motion (Pendlebury et al., 1998).

There are two basic methods for accomplishing change, either management adds forces working for the change or diminishes the forces working against the change. Adding forces will increase tension leading to higher emotionality, higher aggressiveness, lower constructiveness and fatigue, why it is preferred to use a method of diminishing the forces working against change (Lewin, 1952).

“Mobilize commitment to change through joint diagnoses of business problems.” (Beer, Eisenstat, & Spector, 1990a, s.161).

Effective change efforts start with a clearly defined problem. When people are involved in the process of diagnosing the organization, defining the problems and the solutions to be applied, then they will be committed to support the change (Beer et al., 1990a).

“Develop a shared vision of how to organize and manage for competitiveness.” (Beer, Eisenstat, & Spector 1990a, s.162).

Vision and mobilizing. The general manager will be able to lead employees towards a vision once there is core groups committed to a joint diagnose. A vision defines new roles and responsibilities, coordinates information and work throughout the organization. An arrangement working through the formal structure and systems will create less resistance (Beer et al., 1990a). The initial vision is what justifies and makes change happen. The vision does not deal with details; it overlooks the broad outline of the change. It includes all major aspects, the causes for change and the ultimate objective. The vision will serve as a landmark throughout the whole process and will be used by managers to steer the process (Pendlebury et al., 1998).

Picture the future state clearly and communicate this picture. If people have no sense of where the change is heading then managing the transition is almost impossible.

”Successful CEOs and their Top Managers spend incredible amounts of time meeting with people one on one, in small sessions and in massive group meetings with literally thousands of people” (Nadler & Nadler, 1998 s.105).

Identify key power groups and build their support. People’s response to change can be characterized in four dimensions: as the ones who make things happen, as those who help things happen, the ones who let things happen and finally those who is opposed to change. There are only a few people in any situation that are absolutely essential in making the change happen and the successful manager target these people at the beginning and try to win their commitment and involvement (Nadler & Nadler, 1998).

Move people. When influencing a group to go through a change the group is led to break a social habit. The breaking of a social habit is considered to be an obstacle not easily overcome, requiring an additional force strong enough to cause breaking (or unfreezing) of the habit. The strength of a social habit is determined by its historical roots and group values (Lewin, 1952). Provide time and opportunity for people to elaborate and leave the old mindset. People need time to mourn the loss of the old and familiar organizational setting (Nadler & Nadler, 1998). Reward the behaviors that are in line with and supporting the change. People are motivated to do things that lead to a desired outcome. Rewards can be comfort or security as well as pay, promotion or recognition (Nadler & Nadler, 1998). Use language and symbols to build support. The most successful political movements have all employed symbols like flags and songs, and language systems like new terms or slogans of values and character. The language and symbols should encapsulate the primary themes of what is tried to accomplish. Successful organizations have been known to make it impossible for individuals to function within the organization without using the new language. The use of the new language shows implicit support and the more it is heard the more people will believe in the legitimacy and the new reality that the change brings (Nadler & Nadler, 1998).

Moving

Analyze, handle and steer. When one attempts to change a social force field in equilibrium one has to consider all of the forces working to maintain this equilibrium. These forces may be groups, subgroups and members with different personalities, relations, barriers, communication and value systems etc. making up a social field. This social field has to be studied as a whole and reorganized in such a way that social events flow in a different way. One also has to take into consideration the economic resources available and the cultural values governing the group (Lewin, 1952). Generate support by displaying the behavior of leaders. Visible actions of respected leaders send signals to the organization. In times of change people will look for every piece of information there is including gossip and anecdotes from supposedly ‘well informed’ sources, trying to find out if management is supporting change or not. People will try to read signals even when there are no signals sent. In this environment even small signals sent can turn into powerful messages. Consequently managers must make sure that every action taken is in line with the change efforts, management must ‘walk the talk’ (Nadler & Nadler, 1998).

Handle shifts in power balance. The balance of power is often altered during a change process. Loss of power may cause individuals to oppose change or trying to turn the change to their advantage. The power issues need to be identified and handled effectively. The balance of power must evolve in line with change objectives (Pendlebury et al., 1998). Handle emotional factors. People react differently to change, some are intimidated and others are attracted by the novelty a change represents. One person may be opposed to the change of the old ways of performing work while others look forward to new and challenging ways of performing work. Change arouses emotions in people and emotions relevant to the change need to be identified. The problems created by these emotions need to be assessed, especially those creating resistance and mental blockage (Pendlebury et al., 1998). Every component of the organization should be seen as a possible leverage point for change. Managers to often focus on either: strategy and structure the hardware or on people and informal arrangements the software. To have congruence in the change the organization should be seen as a system where all components are simultaneously at work influencing the organization and moving the change forward (Nadler & Nadler, 1998). Steer the change process. Plan the process and establish a logical structure for the change. Facilitate and accelerate the change, make certain that the process runs properly from day to day. Provide the organization with suggestions and impartial advice. Monitor attitudes towards the change among key staff personnel. Identify and make available the tools and methods needed by employees. Initiate coaching and follow through (Pendlebury et al., 1998).

Manage transition. Develop structures to manage the transition. Develop a step-by-step transition plan. Appoint a transition manager; it has to be a senior manager with ability to handle stress and ambiguity. Change will not succeed unless someone is handed the responsibility. The transition manager will need the support of a transition team to help him get people abandon status quo. Allocate resources. Transitions are expensive with meetings, allocating of key people, use of consultants, training etc. It is essential to create structures besides the formal structure, which can concentrate on change specific issues during the period of transition (Nadler & Nadler, 1998). Catalyze the change process. Set up an organization to manage and stimulate change. If employee competences are to be exploited an organization able to structure and channel that competence is needed. Change is accomplished through constant work of: creating support, reaffirming the change validity, and overcoming resistance to change and stagnation. Change requires allocated resources (Pendlebury et al., 1998). Communicate actively the change process. Communication means not merely informing people but to enhance and accelerate the process by generating an explosion of ideas. The whole organization must engage in frequent and broad communication during a change process. If change communication is not to degenerate it must follow strict procedures; but the procedures must not discourage the need for self-expression and information (Pendlebury et al., 1998).

Change people. The group allows the individual a certain freedom to diverge from the group's standard of conduct. Should the individual deviate too much s/he will be in increasing difficulties being ridiculed, treated severely and finally ousted from the group. Individuals therefore generally stay pretty close to group standards when in a group they wish to belong to. The resistance to diverge from group standards is proportional to the strength of the group's social value (Lewin, 1952). Define what is not due to change.

People need to know that not everything connected with the past is of low value. With a sense of continuity in the change the concerns for radical changes in power relations and core values can be reduced (Nadler & Nadler, 1998).

”Foster consensus for the new vision, competence to enact it, and cohesion to move it along” (Beer, Eisenstat, & Spector, 1990a, s.162)

Strong leadership is needed, offer support to those managers who want to help and outplacement to those who won't. When the new roles and responsibilities are defined the employees need to develop the competencies needed to make the new organization work. The very existence of new roles, responsibilities and change in coordination patterns will force employee learning. Management must support the employee learning process, providing employees with proper training opportunities (Beer et al., 1990a). Identify the technical and interpersonal skills needed. Determine training and coaching requirements and evaluate them. Create a dynamic of self-improvement to support change. Train and coach individuals (Pendlebury et al., 1998). Replace the people who cannot or will not function in the new organization. The appropriate time for replacement is when someone has had a chance to prove him or herself and failed; this makes it easier for everybody to accept replacement as a solution. Replacement might even reinforce the organization's commitment to change since it shows management's commitment to see the change through (Beer et al., 1990a).

”Change means acquiring and assimilating new skills, as well as new ways of thinking and behaving.” (Pendlebury, Grouard, & Meston, 1998, s.46)

Participation. Resistance to change from an individual is also due to how far from the group standard the change standard lies. The resistance will diminish if the social value of the group standard is lessened or if the social value of the change standard is perceived as being higher than that of the group standard. Experience indicates that it is easier to change individuals formed into groups than have them changed individually (Lewin, 1952). Build change support in the planning and implementing process through participation. If a change is imposed on people then they will obtain power from sabotaging the efforts. If people have been participating in the planning and implementation they will instead get a feeling of accomplishment from seeing the change through. People develop a sense of ownership through participation (Nadler & Nadler, 1998). Participation enables the organization to make use of the employees' full diversity of competence in the change process. By involving employees in the change work resistance is overcome and the lasting of the change is ensured (Pendlebury et al., 1998). Group decision facilitates change as it links motivation to action. A lecture or discussion may provide motivation and a request is motivating as long as it is in line with the individual's preferences. Motivation alone though is not a force strong enough to lead to change. The decision leads to change, as the individual is prone to stick to the own decision made and is committed to follow the group decision. Group decision thereby seems to have a freezing effect on behavior and a short process of making a decision is capable of influencing behavior for months (Lewin, 1952).

Refreezing

Continuous perspective. A change of a group's performance is frequently short lived. The change will soon return to the previous level of performance as attention shifts from achieving the change to coping with everyday problems. This indicates the necessity of including 'freezing of the new level of performance' as an objective in the planning of change; it is merely not enough having to reach the new level of performance (Lewin, 1952). Have revitalization spread to all departments but do not push it from the top. General managers are often tempted to force the newfound organizational insights on to the employees, especially if a rapid change is called for. Force is a mistake though which will short-circuit the change process, the best way is to let each department elaborate the change and find its own application. This elaboration process will create commitment to learn and adapt to the new organization (Beer et al., 1990a). Collect feedback and analyze the transition. Managers should have a battery of tools such as surveys, focus groups and interviews for collecting information about what is working well in the process and what is not (Nadler & Nadler, 1998).

Adjust organization. If the change has managed to change group standards the group will both facilitate the change and later help stabilize the change at the new level of performance. Freezing of the new level is sometimes possible through an organizational set up which causes a stable circular process of cause and effect (Lewin, 1952).

"Institutionalize revitalization through formal policies, systems, and structures." (Beer, Eisenstat, & Spector, 1990a, s.164)

When the new organization is in place and running properly, when the right people are in position, and the new approach has settled, then it is time for general managers to consider how to institutionalize change. To change structures and systems at earlier stages tends to backfire. It is better to wait with the institutionalizing till it is clear for everyone what the needs of the new organization are (Beer et al., 1990a). Analyze the existing situation in detail and identify improvement opportunities. Develop a plan in detail for every improvement initiative chosen. Carry out pilot testing and use the result as learning experiences that can be applied to the change in general. Set up systems ensuring that the change will last (Pendlebury et al., 1998). Monitor the revitalization process and adjust strategies according to emerging problems. An organization that is continuously monitoring and adjusting its own behavior according to changes in its environment has become a learning organization. Monitoring of the change process needs to be a shared process (Beer et al., 1990a).

Method

Informants

The age of the informants ranged from 35 to 54 years, half of the group was between 35-40 years of age. The rest of the informants were spread in age up till 54 years. There were six male and five female interviewed.

The informants' educational status ranged from high school to university degree. Among the university degrees were represented: Business Administration, Sociology, Industrial Relations and HR specialized education. Previous work experience among the interviewees were: Business control, HR IT, the rest were HR professionals with several or many years of experience in HR work from both AB VOLVO in different companies and other employers. Among the previous work experiences were line manager, HR IT manager, HR manager, specialist and generalist functions in different fields of HR, VP HR IT.

Current position in AB VOLVO of the informants were as follows: Director HR Center Of Expertise Sweden, HR Manager, HRT Project Manager for UK and Global Workstream Lead for Change Management, HRT Coordinator HR Service Center, Manager HR Service Center, HR Transformation project Change Management Sweden, Project Manager HRT Sweden, -Sr. VP HR Business Office (HR Strategy, Communications, Financial Control, Diversity, Vendor Mgt, Global HR Coordination) -Global Recruitment Process (AB Volvo), Manager Business Partner/HR administration Human Resource Service Center, Human Resources Manager, Human Resources.

There was no visible connection between age or sex and position in AB VOLVO among the informants.

Instruments

The instrument used to collect empirical data for this research was an interview guide, which is presented next in the coming text:

Below is presented the question the whole assignment aims to answer; this is thereby also the question the interview aims to have answered. How do we take the step from design and planning to implementation and execution? In order for the interview to have the necessary structure it is divided into three main parts according to a well-known change theory of Lewin in version of Cummings & Worley (2005). It is presented below to show how a change may look like in theory.

During the stage of *unfreezing* it is common to focus the efforts on diminishing the forces working to maintain the current behavior. This can be accomplished by delivering information showing which behavior that is desired and making obvious the difference between the desired and the undesired behavior. Unfreezing is sometimes achieved through the act of disconfirmation of the undesired behavior in order to motivate the individual to change. During the stage of *moving* the work is concentrated on changing the individual's behavior. This is done by interventions into the organization's structures and processes in order to create new behaviors, attitudes and values among the individuals in the organization. *Refreezing* is the work of stabilizing the desired behav-

ior among individuals once it is shown. This is usually achieved through the introduction of new policies, norms and culture – a new structure that supports the new behavior (Cummings & Worley 2005).

The interviews aim to catch the knowledge and experience that you and your colleagues possess and have gathered during the current change process. In short the answer should contain the information that you consider being important to deliver to your colleagues who are in the same situation as you are. The interview is to answer the question above. In order to have a structure to this answer the interview is divided into three main parts: unfreezing, moving and refreezing. The structure is needed in order to have this answer fitted into the essay. Your version is the right version!

Procedure

Data for the research result was gathered by conducting interviews. The contact person Selling in AB VOLVO selected the persons to be interviewed. Fifteen persons were asked to participate and four persons declined, there were eleven interviews conducted. The interviewees were selected to represent different companies, departments and different levels of hierarchy in order to gather a broad material. The interviewees were all involved in active change work within HRT. Some of the interviewees were employed exclusively for change work and others were employed in the regular organization and also objects for change. Personal characteristics data of the interviewees were gathered after all the interviews had been carried through, thus minimizing having the researcher's perception distorted by the interviewees' status in the hierarchy. The material was collected by handwriting during the interview and immediately after transcribed by help of computer. The transcript was then sent back to the interviewee for approval, and in some cases correction and additional information was collected. The interviews' material was elaborated and put together in a report when the last interview had been conducted, thus minimizing having one interview influencing another. The first report made was sent to the interviewees and Selling as feedback. From this first report then were extracted the material presented in this essay.

The interview was to answer the question: How do we take the step from design and planning to implementation and execution? In order to have a structure to this answer the interview was divided into three main parts: unfreezing, moving and refreezing. The whole process was done in 1 hour of time. Additional questions and discussions would add to the time needed. Such discussions would not interfere with the interview and were held after the interview was done. No more than two interviews a day were conducted in order not to compromise the result. All but one interview was transcribed before the next interview was conducted. The interviewees were all initially contacted by e-mail and informed on the research by Selling. The following day the researcher contacted them by e-mail to start set dates for interviews, the interview guide with information was sent out with the same e-mail. The first interview was carried out one week after the initial contact and the last within three weeks. Communication with interviewees during research was maintained by e-mail and occasional phone calls.

The interviews have been qualitative since they have aimed to catch the perspective of the interviewee. This has been achieved by having a low structure imposed on the interviewee namely the three stage model of Lewin, and by giving the interviewee great freedom to tell their own story within the given frame. The interviewees were left to

freely associate to their own change, change in general and Lewin's theory. The focus has been organizational change in AB VOLVO. The interview has thereby also been semi-structured and the researcher has made efforts to keep interpersonal relationship at that level, in trying not to influence the result of the interview. Probe and follow up questions were used scarcely and only to get the interviewee started telling their story. The research can be said to be prospective in its result, but retrospective information were also gathered but left out of this report.

The technique of using a template analysis has been applied to the research. A template is basically a set of themes or headlines under which to sort the content of an unstructured interview. As the text from the interviews was read through themes were identified under which the text then was sorted. Some of the themes were to stay intact, while others were modified or rejected during the work of analyzing the text. First order themes were unfreezing, moving and refreezing; second order themes were the headlines chosen.

Design

The research design has been that of a case study. The case studied being HRT and the people involved in this process and their experience and knowledge of change. In order to be able to generalize a single case study it must be guided by theory that either is confirmed or rejected during gathering and elaboration of information. The theory may also be complemented with new findings, which makes the theory even more useful in a particular situation or in general. The external validity of the case study relies heavily on to the extent which one is able to make generalizations. The external validity is also strengthened if other studies are found that confirm your own findings. This research was completed with a survey among change agents to try to catch their experience of the change process. Finally the gathered information was analyzed and the picture rounded up in a discussion section of the essay. The investigation kept a - no case specific - approach as it was to be able to generalize the findings; this was also a way to avoid revealing personal or company confidential information.

The case study considers the context of situations when evaluating actions and events, which keeps the researcher from mistaking causality with correlation; and by so doing the researcher achieves a high internal validity in the result. The case study will provide a story that is reasonable, convincing and logically acceptable; will describe how events are linked to each other and how they unfold; will deliver a sufficient causal explanation which makes sense. Design guidance has been received from the book of de Vaus (2001).

A hermeneutic understanding was applied to this research. In the hermeneutic cycle you alter between part and whole in order to successively get a deeper understanding of both. The part and the whole interacts and affects each other, consequently one can be understood by studying the other. This understanding has been used throughout the research. The interviewees for illustration were considered as parts contributing to the whole of the picture, resulting in a broad and informative material, which wouldn't have occurred seeking a unanimous picture. There has been a theory steering the whole research (Lewin, 1952) and the same theory has steered the interviews (Cummings & Worley 2005) namely the three stage-theory of Lewin. The theory then has had an impact on and influencing the interviews' result. The result of the interviews in turn put a

new light on the theory completing the cycle, or so to speak theory and result mirror each other. Method guidance has been received from the book of Cassell & Symon (2004).

Result

Interviews

The interviewees were selected to represent different companies, departments and different levels of hierarchy within AB VOLVO in order to get as informative material as possible. The informants were deeply involved in ongoing change work within their workplace thus with a highly specialized focus of change. The interviews were fairly unstructured and the information gathered from the informants was rich with information but it was not unanimous. The purpose of the research was not to establish if there were any unanimous points of view among the informants. The purpose of the research was to collect as many ideas as possible of how to answer the question asked by AB VOLVO. Thus the result is a compilation of answers received from the informants to the question asked. This is in accordance to design and method used for this research.

The result represents the collective knowledge of the interviewed change agents. Each of them has contributed to this material from their own perspective. All the different perspectives combined make up the content very much like a cut cake. Like each interview representing a piece of cake and each piece of cake together makes up the cake or in this case the result. This is just like the different grounded theories combined under previous research above, where each grounded theory contributes to the whole picture.

The result is sorted under the headlines of unfreezing, moving and refreezing since the interviewees acknowledged these headlines during the interviews. The result gives answer to the question of how to take the step from design and planning to implementation and execution. The answer suggests a strategy containing communication, participation, learning, steering and organizational structures.

Unfreezing

Communication. Prepare for change by setting up a vision about why and what is to be done and to be achieved. Change management must be uniting concerning plans and attitudes toward change. One or a couple of persons must take on the role of owning and pushing the change in the name of the company. Look into the future and picture a reality that is aligned with the vision and convey this picture to the employees. Your message as a manager needs to be explicit and clear. Prepare people for communication, since communication doesn't get better than the recipient is ready for. Communicate the new model, the advantages, possibilities and returns as well as demands and expectations that the new model implies. Tell employees about the earnings and the worth that change brings both to the company and to the individual. The advantages for the individual must be emphasized. The new model needs to be marketed 'what's in it for me' to create a desire strong enough to motivate adaptation. Communication and information is A & O in a change process.

Participation. The employees may for a long time have lived with their current work roles and ways of performing work. It is important that those targeted for change get the opportunity to find and adapt to their new roles. Those people who are supposed to carry the change through and work in the new organization needs the opportunity to be involved in the development work of the new model. Participation is important for people to get an understanding of and to acknowledge the new ways of work, to be motivated to push change forward. Investments in dialogue and discussion time in the unfreezing phase of change will repay in the moving phase. The desired state is to have as many employees participating in planning and development work as possible. *How do we get people to feel useful in change?* It is important to have the opportunity to gather around the change, that people targeted by change efforts get the opportunity to participate in the development, and that resources are allocated for this purpose. Participation is necessary to create an awareness among employees that leads to change pressure coming from ground level; this will lead to a much speedier moving phase.

People. People have different views of change. Those active in change work, as agents, need to be committed to the vision, this is particularly important concerning organizational key persons when in a large-scale change. People react differently to change. Some will push forward, others will pull back, and yet others will stand indifferent. These differences need to be considered by change agents so that they do not treat people, as they are all alike when executing change plans. It takes time to change people's behavior. People are different, some feel at home in change and even find it to be challenging and fun; others want more of structure, peace and tidiness. You need to take time to explain the reasons for change to everyone according to their own conditions. It is important that everybody gets the opportunity to elaborate the existing information and come to his or her own conclusions.

There must be a clear decision made when dialogue and discussion of an issue is over, so that people is not in uncertainty about the prevailing conditions. It makes it easier for employees to decide whether the change is something they can support and adapt to or not. All employees will not be able to adapt to change; these people must in time get the chance to look for other work opportunities. Identify early the people who are to man the new organization; in the moving phase they need to know in order to adapt to their new roles.

Managers. Managers must take ownership of the change, enter the change process and become themselves change agents. Managers must contribute in the work of changing employees' behavior since the employees will be prone to go back to the old behavior; they need to be corrected till the new behavior has settled. Managers must argue in favor for change, they need a mindset of the change so that they are able to identify their new environment. Thus information to line management must be clear. A project cannot change a thing; it is only line management that can make a change happen. Line management must be made conscious of and trained for new roles and ways of performing work.

Commitment from line management can be achieved through having persons such as Chief Executive Officers and top management to understand what kind of change effort is undertaken. With extended knowledge of the magnitude and expectations of the

change these key persons might ease on their demands during crucial moments of transformation. These key persons are the people that can help make the change happen. If these people agree on planning, implementation and execution of plans then the change will be carried through. The organization has to acknowledge the change, it is not a free choice whether to have it or not but the change will be implemented and executed once the decision is made.

Moving

Communication. The best way to get people to follow you in a change is to communicate very clearly what it is that you want them to do. You must be able to answer any question that they might have; if you can't then the change process will immediately be in doubt. The employees' questions can be foreseen thus the answers can be prepared in advance and learned by change agents. There must be a lot of communication about who, where, when, how and why the change is taking place. People need this information in order for them to adjust to and move forward in the change process. As part of this process it is very important that people get together in networks to exchange experiences. There is never enough time to discuss how a transfer from theory to reality might look like. This discussion is indispensable if operative personnel are to receive and understand the change. Just telling people 'what to do' leads to people passively follow instructions without always accepting the change process.

Learning. The educational efforts going must support the ongoing change. We will work a lot with ourselves in workshops: who we are; what is my competence; what are my weak and strong sides; with what can I contribute in this work? We will work to build a team to get a common understanding of the change: where are we heading; what challenges lies ahead; how will we in a future look at the journey of change; and how will we work in the future? Build a shared point of view, participation and commitment, what will this change call for from us in the form of changed behavior? We all have special competences and experiences, which all are needed in the change work.

Evaluate continuously that people participating in workshops etc. have understood the change. Adjust education to the level where those learning are; make continuous evaluations of their knowledge. Each meeting will have brought about a higher understanding and learners will be ready to move to a higher stage for each meeting held.

Plan training programs for line management and other employees so that they are aware of and prepared for the new organizational setting. The process of change involves more people than targeted personnel, the whole organization is involved in this process and everybody needs to be informed in order to be able to adjust to new circumstances. There is a need for a certain deprogramming of the organization in order to remove the old ways of performing work.

To be able to adjust their behavior people need to get an opportunity to try out their new role and function. Trust people's ability to successively adjust when working in their new roles. Give people practical guidance and show them how things concrete are to be done. Focus on delivering information that people are actively seeking, and on those parts of the new ways of performing work that people feel are urgent for them to learn. Lay the foundation for people to make them: understand the purpose, willing to participate, and have the urge to develop. Use the technique of small steps forward,

good examples, and people telling others about their own experiences and struggles in the change work. The new reality in itself will be a motivator to change, as people in a sense will be forced to learn in order to adapt to the new organizational setting.

Steering. There are two extremes of managers: those who are anxious to get things started and those who are hiding and hoping that change will pass by, being no concern of theirs. Most managers are somewhere in between the extremes and accepting the change. Those accepting the change do not deploy new systems, they terminate old contracts, do not employ new personnel or employ on short-term contracts.

In order to make an impact on the organization one need to identify and delimit the efforts to be made by the project and stand firm in execution of them. Should there be a slack between planning and execution then initiative will be lost. One does not become a function of expertise if one does not perform with competence and ability, if you do then your decisions will be respected and your services offered in demand. Confidence and trust is something you build in cooperation with others.

The change must not be characterized by ‘project people and from above perspective’ but change must be carried by those who are to man the new organization, if it is to be likely to prevail when the project organization is eventually phased out. Personnel targeted for change should gather to exchange knowledge and experiences and get information on project progress. This is a way to transfer change from strategic level to operative level, to bring the organization together and implement the change. There is a need to follow up on progress to discuss how well the change is meeting expectations and to apply a constant pressure towards the new organization. It is also a good thing that someone shows an interest in the continuing work being done. Someone to remind of what has been decided yet inviting to discussion and influencing on development.

One should not become a manager at his/her own workplace since it is very difficult to change already established patterns of relations. Develop a systematic in meeting with organizational key persons and give them the opportunity to meet and discuss their problems together. Sort out who will be the owners of the change processes; this is otherwise a source of ambiguity. Unions have a position between managers and employees, it is important to involve them in the change process.

Structure. Four objects need to be in place when moving in to change and they are processes, systems, management structure, and harmonization of agreements. Identify in detail the processes that must be implemented, describe and carry them out. Make checklists over work routines available. Coordinate local development with overall development. Shut down the old systems when the new ones start to operate it will make it obvious the progress of the project. Set up a gate structure and specify the gates, what is to be done and who is responsible, and dates for when and what to change, when people are supposed to move. Do not change the dates – if you do then the organization will lose respect for the change.

Move the functional responsibility of the organization when it is settled, even though personnel aren’t ready to be moved geographically yet. Move the functional leadership before moving the organization, this means that every unit has identified the people who are to man the new organization and where they are to function. If these people do not want to move geographically in due time then they lose their current job.

Develop a ready plan for how to handle transfers and redundancies of personnel; these issues will arise when carrying the change through. When change is a rationalization

process these issues need to be handled with clarity so that there will be no doubts emerging. It is not enough to introduce new processes and organizational settings, it takes people who want to and have the ability to function in the new model. Organizational change may involve a successive shift of some personnel to be successful.

There is a need for certain flexibility within the frame of the change model in order to give units the opportunity to have the model adjusted to local circumstances. Surveys should be done continuously to get an understanding of the organization's opinion of the process. Start measuring frequencies to check if units are operating ok. Gather feedback from units to check the workload. Have units logging their actual work to see if it is in line with what is planned for.

Refreezing

Processes, policies, systems. Develop and decide on user documentation for processes, routines and systems. This can be done continuously during the change progress. Decide what is to be flexible and what is to be in common. Make this information easily accessible, and train and inform the employees. Phase in new policies and routines successively through dialogue and discussion with managers and Union representatives as the change moves forward, phase them in when they are agreed upon. If the full package is to be imposed on the employees all at once, it would probably cause anger and resentment and thereby resistance to change.

Build policies, systems and organizational settings for the future, which are so clear and understandable that they are possible to implement and observe. Documentation of policies alone does not make the organization observe them though; one needs to develop the managers' ability to correctly evaluate and make the right decisions within given frames, then there will be results.

Objectives, goals, measures. Identify personal goals and behaviors of the employees that are in line with the demands of the new model. Personal development goals agreed upon with management can be used as a tool to secure change, goals supporting the new model can be incorporated and then management will automatically follow up on the new model both annually and midterm.

If the new model is a rationalization project it must show results and that the change has delivered according to expectations. There is a need for measures to be able to evaluate if development is taking the direction that is decided. Cost calculations must be developed before the process is leaving the moving phase. Set up performance goals to make sure that the new model delivers a higher quality and efficiency. Put the results meeting expectations on display, it provides the organization with energy. A forum for key stakeholders can be set up where successes can be recognized and celebrated which is important in order to maintain change. This forum can also be used to raise issues, which are representing problems that must be dealt with.

Training, recruiting, surveys. Work continuously with the change to make it prevail and evolve. Develop long-term education and training programs. Set up objectives for education and training that are measured and followed up. If you want to change people's behavior, then the message of the new model must be continuously repeated for a long

period of time; there is otherwise a risk that people move back to the old and safe way of doing things.

Have the recruiting process aligned with the new model. It is important to create a career path in the new organization in order to make the less attractive jobs of the new organization more attractive; the less attractive jobs then become a lever for the employee to the more attractive ones. This is one way to make it easier to recruit personnel to the new organization at the lower levels.

Surveys can be done among for example key stakeholders and customers to clarify their needs and to find out what their experiences and evaluations of the change process are. Document the change process and list pros and cons of the change journey, experiences made and lessons learned.

Introduce reward systems supporting the new model. Team building processes can be organized for targeted groups of personnel.

Criticism. Interviewee speaks: - I am a bit hesitant to refreezing; if we with culture mean collective attitudes and values then we will be in constant moving. There will always be new policies and norms emerging from a changing surrounding world. Those leading the organization today will soon leave through ex. pension and new attitudes, values and norms will enter the organization with the new people being employed. I don't believe we will have a static culture or organization; it would be suicide. Organization and culture should evolve in a stable and controlled manner but yet changing in harmony with changing circumstances.

Discussion

Core strategies

Cycle of learning. The impression is that organizational change can be built around a fundamental strategy of information, communication and participation. These themes are repeated continuously in this research in used theories, previous research, and empirical data presented. This strategy will be useful whether one uses programmatic, learning or a combined strategy as a basic strategy for change although different. If using Håkansson's (1991) and Norrgren's (1995) models with Jo Hatch's (2002) theorizing for analyze we make the following conclusion: In the programmatic strategy it should be the managers and appointed change agents applying the strategy on employees; In the learning strategy it should be the employees closest to changing circumstances applying the strategy trying to influence other employees, managers and appointed change agents to change; In the combined strategy there should of course be a combination of appointed change agents, managers and employees applying the strategy on each other in trying to influence organizational development. In any change there will be differences of opinion and the group being most successful in influencing the others will be the ones steering the development of an organization. Information, communication and participation will also occur in each of Lewin's (1952) three stages of unfreezing, moving and refreezing. It is very much so even if one is not aware of it; the difference then will be the use of the strategy in a systematic way as a means to be successful in influencing the development of change. Information, communication and par-

ticipation might be considered to constitute a cycle of learning and a diagnostic instrument to tell when employees are ready to move on to the next level of change. Meaning when employees have gone from being informed on a subject matter to participating in developing the subject matter then they are ready to receive new information in order for the change to progress. Keeping this in mind a change agent will be able to adjust the pace of change to employees need still pushing it forward at optimal speed.

This may stand as a short answer to the question asked: How do we take the step from design and planning to implementation and execution?

Information. Information is the starting point of every change process whether it is a programmatic, learning or a combined strategy applied. Without information there will be no planned change of any kind! People are asked to change their minds, they are asked to change their behavior and they are asked to learn new ways and get rid of the old. They are entitled to know what, when, where, how and most important why. If people do not know why they are not the least committed to change, this leads us to why as the most important issue to start with and the absolute core of change. Information is the starting point of Håkansson's model (1991) as the need for organizational change is communicated to employees by management. In Lewin's (Cummings & Worley, 2005) theory it is pointed out that employees need information on desired and undesired behavior. In the grounded theories (Beer et al, 1990a; Nadler & Nadler, 1998; Pendlebury et al., 1998) the need for communication is emphasized and as exchange of information is the basis for communication the message of information lies implicit throughout the text. In the result the need to inform people on different issues is repeated in all three stages of Lewin (1952) and often the word communication used is synonymous with bringing information.

Communication. Once people are informed they will have a need to discuss this information with other people. They will make inferences with others that they perceive as having similar conditions to find out if the change gives them fair conditions. There will be misunderstandings and misinterpretations of information. There will be conclusions made and proposals for improvements of the change. Any change agent knowing this also understands that communicating accurate information is absolutely crucial for having a journey of change taking the desired direction. This communication needs to be upholding till the desired organizational state is achieved since the situation will stay the same all the way through change, with new information coming continuously. In fact, the change may be considered completed when there is no new information coming on the subject. Communication is the exchange of information between individuals in order to reach a common understanding and be able to joint venture. Håkansson's model (1991) bears the implicit and explicit message of change as different degrees of a joint venture. Lewin (1952) and the grounded theories (Beer et al., 1990a; Nadler & Nadler, 1998; Pendlebury et al., 1998) convey the message of communication as a way to influence employees and convince them to go through the change. One creates a joint venture by argument and thereby influences the employees' perception of change in a positive direction. In the result communication is emphasized as a means to prepare employees for change and make them follow a leader through the process.

Participation. Participation in the change process is the key to deliver accurate and appropriate information and upholding communication. Targets for change are in a stress-

ful situation where they are able only to receive limited amounts of information at a time and most often only the kind of information that they themselves are looking for at the moment. Participation in the change process gives the targets the conditions for learning they need and a sense of control, which reduces stress and thus making them open to receive more information. Participation also gives the targets for change the right kind of information and the appropriate doses of it. Letting employees participate in the change process will give a faster journey of change to the reasons given above, and to the fact that there will be less mistakes made during the journey since everybody are linked directly to the change process without middle hands corrupting information. Lewin (1952) sees participation as a way to facilitate group decisions, which in turn is the first step of refreezing the change. The participation section (Orgland, 1997; Marrow, 1969; Bordia et al., 2004; Nurick, 1982; Zeffane, & McDonald, 1993), on page 9 is devoted to show the importance of letting employees participate in the change process. The grounded theories (Beer et al., 1990a; Nadler, & Nadler, 1998; Pendlebury et al., 1998) explicitly emphasize the importance of having employees participating in the change process. Following citation is taken from the result:

“Participation is important for people to get an understanding of and to acknowledge the new ways of work, to be motivated to push change forward. Investments in dialogue and discussion time in the unfreezing phase of change will repay in the moving phase.”

Diagnosing organizations

First level. If the organization finds itself being on the first level of Håkansson’s (1991) model with little or no need to develop any further but still has to go through a change process, the appropriate strategy to choose would probably be the programmatic. The people in this organization are used to being told what to do and the majority might even prefer to have it this way. Thus the problems coming from using a programmatic strategy are not likely to occur. Since such an organization might be handicapped by ‘learned helplessness’ a strong coordination and steering of processes is needed to make change happen. But there is always a benefit coming from letting people participate in the change process on their own terms. The amount of participation is then a question of balancing the company’s need for steering the process with participation ability among employees.

Third level. If the organization finds itself being on the third level of Håkansson’s (1991) model it is probably an organization with a stable production and development cycle. This organization develops new products in intervals and capitalizes on these in between. This organization has experience of change work and would probably benefit from using a combined strategy. The organization needs steering in order to get the change process started but the organization is able to handle the process once it has started. Thus participation is a crucial part of change for this kind of organization to get employees to understand what is to be achieved and to get their commitment. The refreezing part should not be ignored. Level one to three of Håkansson’s (1991) model could be considered to be part of the unfreezing process for this kind of organization.

Fifth level. If the organization finds itself being on the fifth level of Håkansson's (1991) model it is probably an organization that has development of new ideas as core business. They have no stable product to capitalize on and every customer presents them with a new set of conditions under which they are to operate. Thus this organization has to continuously adapt to ever changing circumstances and undoubtedly would benefit from using a learning strategy. In this organization employees are committed to evolution of business ideas and need no steering to focus on what is important for the company. The problems of using a learning strategy are not likely to occur in this organization still management need to set objectives for the employees to steer themselves towards.

This research. The author would say that this research and the research being used in this essay are of 'third level organizations'. The fact that the research made (interviews) and the research presented here of (Beer et al., 1990a; Nadler & Nadler, 1998; Pendlebury et al., 1998) are of the same kind of organizations is what made it possible to integrate them into one. As we see in Håkansson's (1991) model a 'first level organization' would have a completely different perspective from a 'fifth level organization'. Thus the different strategies used would be all too different from each other to be integrated if they are not both adjusted and adapted to a combined strategy in a 'third level organization' change process. Like the case with "perspectives" below and middle management, the 'third level' represents the fuller image of change. Therefore the most useful perspective when to achieve a general image of change is the third level. Still a focus on one of the other two levels would produce an image of change more suited to these kinds of organizations. This research may serve as a lever for such a research effort though. This research is of a third level organizational change according to Håkansson's (1991) model. It is worth noting though that the organization about to be changed bears the sign of a fifth level organization as citation from the introduction: "HR professionals are highly adaptable to ever changing circumstances and solve problems as they occur". This is essentially what the Human Resource Transformation (HRT) in AB VOLVO is all about. If using Ellström's (1992) model for illustration one might say that there is a minor conflict between the technical rational perspective and the humanistic perspective, which the HRT-project aims to solve.

Perspectives

Strategic. The complete essay mirrors different perspectives of change. At the strategic level there is Lewin (1952) giving an overview of change. This overview may give direction for the necessary decisions to be made in a change process and in which order to make them. It is also a way to diagnose the progress of an ongoing change whether it is in the unfreezing, moving or refreezing stage. This diagnose may give direction to what kind of actions to implement and what kind of actions to enhance and accelerate if necessary in order to have a speedier process. Lewin's (1952) theory points out what processes are necessary to have it's due course in order for the change process to be successful. Should it be found that these processes have not occurred in a change then that may stand as a course for strategic intervention in the change process.

Middle. Middle management might turn to the three grounded-theories presented in “The creation of permanent changes” (Beer et al., 1990a; Nadler & Nadler, 1998; Pendlebury et al., 1998). This part of the essay is more oriented towards features of change and presents the reader with suggestions of what to include during certain phases of change; it also presents the reader with some reasons for why it is necessary to include these features. The essay’s introductory theory (Ellström, 1992; Håkansson, 1991; Jo Hatch, 2002; Norrgren 1995; Beer et al., 1990b) presents the reader with the possible consequences of leaving certain features out, it also presents further reasons for why to include certain features, see participation (Orgland, 1997; Marrow, 1969; Bordia et al., 2004; Nurick, 1982; Zeffane & McDonald, 1993).

As the features are suggestions it is up to management to decide which suggestions are appropriate for their change and which are not. Being grounded theories these suggestions stem from hard earned experience of other companies in change. This part presents the reader with pitfalls of change and how to avoid them; it also provides the change agent with the tool for taking calculated risks during a change.

Operative. Operative levels might turn to the interviews result as that part is more action oriented, describing and leaving suggestions more close to ‘reality terms’ of what actions to take during the certain phases of the ‘three-stage model’ of Lewin (Cumings, & Worley, 2005). The thoughts presented in the interviews’ result came from people who were in the middle of a change process, thus their minds were activated and they were focused on change and giving their best. Each of them were also naturally focusing on their specific part of the change process, thus the result of each of them contributing with their specific part of the result. This should be an ideal speaking partner for an operative manager in times of ambiguity when not knowing what to do, to be able to turn to advice sprung from people being in the same situation.

Demarcation. There is no visible gap between strategic and middle management perspective or between middle management and operative management; it is more of a gradual transition of perspective. The visible gap occurs when going from strategic to operative perspective, which clearly can be seen if reading the above-presented material from both ends. Thus middle management personnel might read and have full benefit of this essay while strategic and operative personnel may choose parts of the material as beneficent. This understanding is part of the hermeneutic cycle, which now is brought to the reader’s attention. Knowing this there is room for understanding the conditions under which other people than you yourself operate.

Lewin

Unplanned change. Lewin (1952) made a distinction between planned and unplanned change. He said that every organization slowly evolves through gradual changes in accommodation to changes in their environment. He calls this gradual evolution unplanned change and he points out that planned change only can be understood against the background of unplanned change. Thus in order to plan a change one must understand the ongoing unplanned change in the organization. Refreezing the organization then is a question of freezing the planned change and not the unplanned change. Unplanned change might be considered to be the embryo of learning strategy.

Democracy. Lewin was in favor of a democratic approach to change, which can be seen in the three-stage theory of unfreezing, moving and refreezing. The democratic approach gives the advantage of changing group values; it gives individual and group decisions that freeze behavior and builds commitment. Still he was not a stranger to an autocratic approach but he points out that the pitfall of this approach is the creation of aggressiveness as it is adding forces to create change.

The democratic approach is not the same as the learning strategy but more in line with a combined strategy. This is understandable since during his active time (Lewin died in 1947) industry were much of 'first to third level organizations' using Håkansson's (1991) model for illustration. Lewin (1952) cannot be said to have considered the learning strategy when he created his three-stage theory. Unfreezing, moving and refreezing may well be applied in a learning strategy though but from different people than in the programmatic strategy. With this in mind the three-stage model may well be considered top-down driven by today's standards but by the standards of yesterday it was learning strategy in evolution. Lewin may be considered to have laid the foundation of today's learning strategy but not being the founder. If we turn to another theoretical paper of his *Field theory and learning* (Lewin 1952) then he presents us with two basic strategies for learning applied to children in school. The first strategy implies a change of a person's need or cognitive structures; the other implies a change of a person's behavior by force or motivation. Change is as we now are aware of a situation in which we learn new.

Remaining criticism. To answer the remaining criticism of Lewin's (1952) three-stage theory namely: being suitable only for small organizations and ignoring organizational politics, it is the author's opinion that these organizational conditions are being considered in the three-stage theory. Organizational politics is something that is part of the 'social field' and to the researchers opinion the three-stage theory of Lewin (1952) can be applied to any organization, big or small, it is only a matter of using the right perspective when applying the theory.

Strength and weaknesses of this research

The interview's result very much confirms what has been found in earlier research although it is more 'hands on' than presented theory under previous research. This research may be looked upon as complementary to the combined and integrated theories of: (Beer et al., 1990a; Lewin, 1952; Nadler & Nadler, 1998; Pendlebury et al., 1998). It gives answer to the question asked by AB VOLVO and a generalized picture of change mature enough to be mirrored to the theories. The internal validity is a question of the interviewees agreeing on the steps proposed as an answer to the question asked. The interviewees have not rejected the result. It is interesting to notice that there are no contradictions at hand and that the interview's result may be used as a strategy for change; this is also the case with the combined and integrated grounded theories presented above. Since the purpose of this research was to collect ideas of how to carry through the actual change there is no statistical elaboration done of the material. The external validity of this report is instead relying on generalization and confirmation from other research. If the report is found to be useful in this area of expertise then this is also a sign of external validity.

Further research

The 'cycle of learning' (information, communication and participation) is delimited enough to serve as a hypothesis to be tested through experiments. The interviews result could be evaluated and developed with help from HRT people or other change agents in other companies to strengthen its validity. The full material of this research could be tested in a change process from start to evaluate what parts of it are essential. From this evaluation then can a simplification and generalization be made that can be tested in a quantitative way through survey research. Further research might focus on programmatic or learning strategy to get a clear image of these kinds of changes. Focus for additional interviews research may lie on a strategic, middle or operative level exclusively.

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