The commercial world is no less challenging than a battlefield. Business organizations, in order to survive and prosper, have to constantly apply the basic laws of survival. Change and adaptability are the two most important weapons that an organization can equip it with. Although, it can work wonders, change is not exactly the easiest to accomplish. If changing personally, professionally and organizationally were a simple straight forward process, we would see many more dreams realized, visions actualized and missions accomplished. Over the years, many an organization has tried to bring a change within itself. These efforts were made under many banners: total quality management, reengineering, right sizing, restructuring and cultural change. But, few have actually been successful. Change has to be applied in the proper form and at the proper time. This article would analyze the factors serving as barriers to change and the ways to overcome them.

1. Not Establishing a Great Enough Sense of Urgency

One has to continuously look into the future, think ahead of time, and to foresee the challenges ahead to sustain the organization growth and tide over the market fluctuations. Sometimes it demands transforming the process or creating a new system. There will be lot of competitive, economic, political, social forces within or outside your organization which will create roadblocks to this change. There may be resistance from senior management. But on closer look we will find all managers in senior management but not enough leaders. A leader is one who creates a sense of urgency and convinces the stakeholders that transformation is required. Dell has been consistently seeing a dip in their profits for the past few quarters. One of the reasons for this is that the competitors have replicated its business model and in the process Dell has lost its
competitive advantage. It remains to be seen how fast it senses this and change its trajectory of
growth. It calls for establishing a sense of urgency and only a great leader can do this.

2. Not Creating a Powerful Enough Guiding Coalition

Most often, a single person may bring in sparks of change through an innovative idea. But in
order to turn that spark into a fire, a consolidated team effort by multiple persons is essential. Weak teams fail to incorporate successful change. In an organization, a change project is
generally initiated by a coalition of 2-3 persons. In case of a successful change, this coalition
grows over time. The strength of the coalition team varies from 5-6 in small organizations to at
least 15-20 in large ones. But most importantly, the leader of the organization should vouch for
the change and support it. Otherwise, the efforts fall flat. Moreover, senior management
members should be roped in. They generally form the core of the team. TCS, a leading IT firm,
enjoys a good culture of change management with the senior management setting the ball on
roll and actively supporting it throughout. Apart from the internal stakeholders, inclusion of
external stakeholders like consumers, union leaders and suppliers may also be included. Author
fails to mention is that it may result into conflict of interest with people from diverse backgrounds
and different levels of hierarchy.

3. Lacking a Vision

Guiding coalition creates a picture of the future and communicates this to all the stakeholders.
If we look at the history, there are a lot of gory examples which has led transformation process
to failure because of vague vision. Apple’s vision of bringing out best computing experience to
all around the world through its innovative hardware and software is clear and compelling
statement that clearly states sense of direction. As explained in the paper, a clear vision is one
which can be communicated in less than 5 minutes or less and get an reaction that signifies
understanding and interest. TCS’s vision of “Global top ten by 2010” is clear and crisp. All their
decisions, including their recent decision to restructure, are driven by this vision. But one thing
which author fails to mention is that, sometimes you are so sure that your vision for the future is
the right one that you fail to take into account critical external or internal factors. You become so
committed to the idea that you lose the vision of today’s realities.

4. Undercommunicating the vision
Generally, organizations use three patterns of communication. In the first, a group communicates a transformation pattern by holding a single meeting. This entails in using 0.0001% of the yearly intracompany communication facilities. In the second pattern, the head of the organization gives many speeches leading to 0.0005% of communication facility utilization. In the third, many speeches, newsletters and visuals are made, but senior executives behave in a way antithetical to an organization. Communicating the change in the most appropriate way is critical to incorporating and maintaining it. Ultimately, it’s the thousands of lower level employees who would implement the change. Every vehicle of communication, like articles, videos, newsletters etc. should be used. Communication channels, being currently wasted on nonessential information should be proper utilized. Communication comes in both words and deeds, and the latter are often the most powerful form.

5. Not Removing Obstacles to the New Vision

Even after successfully communicating the vision there are always obstacles which needs to be removed for successful transformation. The obstacle could be precedence of self interest over organization’s interest; obstacle could be compensation or performance appraisal system. In an organization there are forces that are resistant to change, and forces that push organization toward change. This can be explained with the help of Lewin’s force-field theory which states that, for organization transformation one must increase forces of change and reduce forces of resistance. TCS, Indian IT organization, felt the need to introduce the new organization structure for better accountability and ownership. The change management was met with employee resistance, particularly in senior management, but once they were convinced, they adapted to new structure.

6. Not systematically planning for, and creating, short term wins

Change implementation is time consuming, spanning a time period from 2-10 years. Most people lose motivation after 12-18 months on not seeing any tangible results. In order to keep people motivated, management should plan for visible performance improvements, create those improvements and follow it with recognizing and rewarding employees involved in improvements. Although the author states that commitment to creating short term visions and goals help in maintaining the urgency, but, there may be change plans which cannot be quantified within a short term. Hence, the setting of targets should depend upon the particular change application.
7. Declaring Victory Too Soon

One must realize that organization or business transformations do not bring in desired results overnight. One needs to be patient and implement the process in an incremental manner. Sometimes managers become lax after tasting first round of success and this kills the transformation process. The basic problem is that the urgency level is not intense enough; the guiding coalition is not powerful enough and vision is not clear enough. The scene of Indian IT industry clearly reflects this. They have been consistently enjoying a high growth rate for the past few years. But the recent developments have forced them to look for greener pastures. Infosys is looking towards Japan and China for growth showing their intense urgency and clarity of vision.

8. Not anchoring changes in the Corporation`s culture

Change has to be deeply imbibed into the corporation`s bloodstream. New behaviors and practices have to be rooted into the company norms and values. Otherwise the effect of change is bound to degrade as soon as the pressure to change is removed. The effects of change have to be properly connected to the elements behind it through proper facts and figures. If left on its own, the employees wrongly conjure up the linking of change to wrong elements. Moreover, the top management should be a living example of the change. Careful selection of the next generation of management is also essential for maintaining the change. Otherwise, the change may become temporary.

In order to survive this competitive world change has become inevitable and these few errors can make a difference between a success and failure.