OBTC

Teaching Conference for Management Educators

OBTC 2015 at University of La Verne
June 17th – 20th, 2015

Submission Template

SUBMISSION GUIDANCE

* Remove all identifying properties from this document *
* All files must be saved in PDF format *
Please include ALL supplementary text at the end of this document
Only one document should be submitted

1) Title of Proposal:

Understanding employee experiences of and reactions to radical organizational change efforts through an interactive exercise

2) Abstract:

Please include a brief session description (not to exceed 100 words). If your proposal is accepted, this description will be printed in the conference program.

Organizational change, particularly radical change, is usually accompanied by a reorganization of systems and structures alongside a redistribution of power across the organization. This organizational overhaul accompanying radical organizational change is usually associated with threats to core identity, self-esteem, job status, and organizational culture. Such dramatic changes, potentially characterized by a paradigmatic shift can challenge employee sensemaking, thereby leading to employee resistance. The proposed session, aims to facilitate participants' understanding of radical organizational change and the accompanying employee resistance. The role of organizational development techniques in increasing employee adaptability and thereby ensuring a successful change management is also highlighted.

3) Keywords:

Organizational Change, change resistance, radical change, change management, employee experiences, interactive exercise

4) Format
☑ Activity or exercise
☐ Discussion roundtable (60 minute only)
☐ General discussion session

5) Time Requested:
☐ 30 Minutes
☐ 60 Minutes (*Roundtables must select 60 minutes*)
☑ 90 Minutes

6) Planning Details:
Does your session have any special requirements for space or materials?

Material need: Overhead projector for PowerPoint Slides, computer/ laptop connection, flip chart with its stand for the interactive discussion.
Space need: Round-tables for interactive discussions among team members. There will be multiple teams.

Pre-registration would be preferred to ensure an effective planning. However, if it is not possible, we can work with walk-ins.

7) Learning Objectives or Goals for the Session:
What are 2-4 specific learning outcomes that participants will get from your session?

The learning objectives of the session are as follows:
1. Understand and experience radical organizational change.
2. Understand and experience employees' reactions to organizational change.
3. Experience and appreciate the ambiguity, uncertainty, and fear associated with organizational change at individual, group and organizational level.
4. Understand the importance of education and communication, employee involvement and participation, and facilitation and support in change processes.

8) Management or Teaching Topics:

Describe what management and/or teaching topics are relevant to your session, and why Please include theoretical, disciplinary, or theoretical foundations that will help reviewers understand how your ideas fit within the broader field of management.

This session serves as an introduction to the concept of organizational change. The primary aim is to make participants understand, experience and appreciate the reactions evoked in employees when a radical organizational change is introduced. The activity and the discussion also highlights the importance of paying attention to these employee reactions that may take the form of employee resistance, to ensure successful change outcomes. It also draws attention to the importance of communication, and employee involvement and participation as valuable organizational development techniques when managing change.

In terms of theoretical foundations, this interactive exercise aims at introducing the theories of organizational change and development with a focus on understanding the employee resistance that is accompanied with change. Lewin's force- field theory of change which students are exposed to in most introductory management classes suggest that for organizational change to happen, managers need to increase forces for change and reduce the opposing forces against change. The exercise in question with a focus on understanding employee resistance makes students understand and appreciate why employee resistance happens. An understanding of employee resistance is crucial for both change agents and recipients. During de-briefing, the participants are also exposed to the concepts of action research and organizational development so as to equip them with various techniques that they can use in increasing employee adaptability to organizational change.

9) Session Description and Plan:

What will you actually do in this session? What activities will you facilitate, how long will they take, and how will participants be involved? Reviewers will be evaluating how well the time request matches the activities you'd like to do, and the extent you can reasonably accomplish the session's goals. Reviewers will also be looking for how you are engaging the participants in the session. Include a timeline for your session.

The topic at hand, namely organizational change naturally lends itself to the learning format of " first do then learn", a methodology recommended by Daft and Marcic in their 2013 presentation at OBTC.

As participants walk in, they will be assigned to groups of 3-5 people, depending upon the attendance in the session. These groups will then be asked to work on an activity focusing on organizational change. The activity in question will be a scenario wherein an organization is experiencing radical organizational change. Each group will be given a different scenario. Before the groups start to analyze the scenario, they will be given some time (about 20 minutes) to work on their team rules and objectives and come up with a name and logo for their team that conveys their team spirit. The idea is to encourage each group to experience a sense of "teamness" by working closely together, developing common goals, and an overall sense of belonging to their respective teams. These groups will then be given another 15 minutes to work on their respective scenarios. This will be followed by a 5-10 minutes break. When participants come back after the break, they will find themselves assigned to completely different teams by the facilitators. The idea is to deprive participants of their sense of comfort, predictability, and routine by introducing a sense of uncertainty, ambiguity, and unfamiliarity associated with radical organizational change. All the rules and team objectives that each team developed will be literally "thrown out the window" since the teams' composition would have completely changed. Additionally, each of these new " teams" will be given only 5 minutes to wrap up and present their analysis of the scenarios (given to the original teams) to all the other participants, something they were not told before. The fact that each of the original teams was assigned different scenarios/ mini-cases will be another important source of chaos and confusion. Each group would give about 2-3 minutes presentation. This will be followed by a debriefing by the facilitators.

This activity works best when participants work in team throughout the semester. When planning the class schedule, scheduling the topic of organizational change toward the tail end of the semester generally gives teams a chance to be extremely cohesive. At that time when the teams are disbanded and members are placed in different teams, the chaos, confusion and the frustration experienced by the participants is very evident.

Session Timeline

Team formation and bonding:	20 Minutes
Team discussion time for scenario analysis:	15 Minutes
Break:	5-10 minutes
Switching teams and team presentation:	20-25 Minutes
Debriefing & Closing remarks:	25-30 Minutes

10) For Activities and Exercises:

Attach any materials needed to run the activity and debriefing questions. Evidence for effectiveness may also be included.

Debriefing questions
-What just happened?
-How did you feel?
-Why did you feel that way?
-What could we have done to make you feel more comfortable and make the process of organizational change less painful and more predictable?
-Is resistance to change always bad? What can change agents do to manage resistance?

11) Implications for Teaching or for Teachers:
What is the contribution of your session?

In a business environment characterized by global pressures and accompanying uncertainty, organizations are undergoing radical organizational change at an ever-increasing rate in order to maintain and increase their competitive advantage. These changes may take various forms ranging from restructuring and re-engineering to merger or acquisitions However, extant research indicates that these change efforts are often judged to be unsuccessful, overwhelmingly due to employee resistance to change (Maurer, 1996; Strebel, 1996). Therefore, it is important that business students better understand the challenges associated with successfully leading change.

The extent of uncertainty, ambiguity, and the fear that leads to negative employee reactions is sometimes not well appreciated by the students. An experiential learning approach utilizing a "first do then learn format"(Daft & Marcic, 2013) makes participants not just understand but also experience how it feels when organizational employees are caught "off guard" by a series of events following the introduction of organizational change. This exercise not only make students appreciate the ambiguity and uncertainty associated with organizational change at various levels, but also highlights the importance of paying attention to these employee experiences. Thus overall, this exercise helps students understand the importance of not just the content but also the context and the process associated with any organizational change. In other words, it helps

students appreciate the importance of the organizational context in which the change is being carried out and how is it being carried out.

12)Application to Conference theme:

How does your session fit with the overall OBTC theme of Learning in Community?

Drawing from the concept of self-managed teams and experiential learning methodology, the primary motivation behind the exercise in question is giving students an opportunity to play an active role in their learning. By being actively engaged in the process, students not only connect to what they are learning experientially but also connect to other fellow learners, thereby developing learning communities that facilitate a sharing of ideas and knowledge.

13)Unique Contribution to OBTC:

Have you presented the work in this proposal before? If so, how will it be different? Is this proposal under current review somewhere else? If so, please explain. How will your proposal be different for the OBTC conference

The activity proposed here has been utilized by the first author successfully when teaching the concept of organizational change to students. Beyond the classroom, this proposal (or its versions) has not been presented elsewhere in any form.

14) References and/or Additional Materials:

References

Daft, R. L., & Marcic, D. (2013). First do, then learn: Start classes with an action exercise. Presented at Organizational Behavior Teaching Conference (OBTC) meeting, Ashville, NC, 2013.

Maurer, R. (June 1996). Using resistance to build support for change. *Journal for Quality and Participation*, 56-63.

Strebel, P. (May 1996). Why do employees resist change? *Harvard Business Review*, 86-92.