

Assessment of Organisational Change Project based on Six Box Model: A Case Study of High-Tech Enterprise in China

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Abstract: Organisational change is regarded as the process of transforming structure and function of the organisations to adapt operations to external business environment with full of uncertainty. The purpose of this paper is to assess organisational change project based six box model as the organisational diagnose technique. A case study is undertaken in a high-tech enterprise in China, Lezhichen Technology, regarding their change initiative by project for further improvement and deeper collaborations with clients. It presents the change overview includes stakeholder analysis, drivers and constraints, cost and benefit analysis together with the change assessment and evaluation. The findings indicate that the outcome of organisational change project is linked with the contributions of both strategic organisational and certain human resource practices. Understanding the potential challenges and strategies can support managers implement the organisational change project in a more effective approach.

Keywords: Organisational Change Project; Stakeholder Analysis; Organisational Diagnose; Six Box Model

Published: Jul 11, 2025

DOI:<https://doi.org/10.62177/apemr.v2i4.489>

1.Introduction

Since established in 2015, Lezhichen Technology (LT) is one of the growing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in high-tech sector in China. The main business of the enterprise covers the range of computer information system, digital meeting system, security protection and intelligent building equipment development with the core values of “honesty, high-quality and innovation”. The main clients of LT enterprise include government, military, transportation, state-owned enterprises and higher education institutions. In the beginning years, LT benefits from the business opportunities led by the rapid development of e-governance in the combination of the increased demand of intelligent governance system in China (Zheng et al., 2013). However, LT encountered with an emerging transformation that local government cut down the financial expenses due to the economic downturn. As a result, many clients intended to reduce cost of further developing e-governance and intelligent building, which brought the pressure to the enterprise for seeking change.

In order to retain the customer groups, LT took various measures to sustain competitive advantage. One of the strategies is to implement a project of organisational change, named the “Client-Centred Project”, to provide the better service for the clients and increase the annual turnover. However, the successful implementation of the strategy on customer orientation requires all people, processes and resources of the organisation to be matched with the new value created by the organisational change process (Guenzi et al., 2011; Frambach et al., 2016). Thus, this paper adopted a case study that provided an assessment of

organisational change project through six box model in a high-tech enterprise in China.

2. Overview of Change Project in LT

2.1 Stakeholder Analysis

In terms of organisational change, it can not only affect the organisation itself but all the stakeholders who are involved in the change process with an interest and would be influential in achieving the success of change implementations (Peltokorpi et al., 2008; Errida & Lotfi, 2021). Thus, it is important for the change practitioners to map out the key stakeholders at the beginning of designing change initiative because the successful change needs the strong input and contributions of them (Jacobs et al., 2013). In this situation, the stakeholder analysis as a process can be used to identify those who will be involved. It helps change practitioners to understand influence, position, behaviour and interest of the stakeholders (Ackermann & Eden, 2011). In this paper, involved stakeholders in the organisational change process in LT enterprise cover the clients, actors, sponsors, owners, legitimisers and opinion leaders.

The Clients are the people who directly get benefit from the change. In this case, the local government as the main client while other customers on business such as military, state-owned company and university receive the benefits from the “Client-Centred Project”. In addition, the sales employees and engineers in the frontline can be the potential client because they are directly contacting with the market and customers.

The Actors is mainly including the group of leaders and the shareholders of the company who want to save the management cost from simplifying the organisational structure due to economic. The Sponsor for this change is the CEO of LT who needs to raise funds for the implementation and consider the direction of the future development of the organisation. The Owners involved in the initiative are the leaders from marketing, administrative and project departments which are collaborating with each other for the implementation of change. However, the main owner is a marketing director who is responsible for the change initiative and implement the project.

The Legitimisers are the employees and managers who are satisfied with the existing structure and values. Some of the department’s managers and its employees may resist to change due to their position will probably be adjusted or even merged during the strategy implementation. The Opinion leader can be the leaders of the staff union because they both represent the employees and impact the employee relation in the organisation. Also, unit managers are considered as the opinion leaders because they are both stands by the organisation and their departments, which brings a dilemma to them when the change is going to influence the specific departments.

2.2 Perceived Drivers and Constraints

Drivers of the change in LT enterprise is discussed in several external and internal factors of the enterprise. The driver that forces LT to change was to retain the clients like the local government which affected by the national economic readjustment due to the economic downturn (economic factor). They would probably be attracted by other new coming competitors who had a better offer on price and service because the national policy remained to support the development of e-governance (political factor). Thus, the government departments might have a review and comparison among the service providers and seek for better service (socio-cultural factor). Alongside the progress of digitalisation in China, both enterprises and government organisations need to improve work efficiency and reduce human capital costs based on information technology (technological factor). In this situation, LT had quickly developed and expanded the businesses a lot (organisational factor). Also, the enterprise had great strength in organisational resources. There are almost 50% of the employees in the company had achieved the postgraduate degree. The CEO of the company had a rich experience in market development and LT had the abundantly experienced partners in the industry such as Huawei and Tencent and good word of mouth among the customers. These points are also can be regarded as the driving forces in the case (resources factor).

In consideration of the constraints, it is identified through atmosphere, structure, individual stakeholder motivation, and used resources. In the atmosphere aspect, LT had the bureaucratic culture somewhere in the organisation. As CEO wanted to provide training sessions that related to the management ability and leadership of the unit managers during the expansion stage of the company. However, these unit managers tended to allocate tasks to the employees rather than attempted to finish as the supervisors. From the structure aspect, the company remained to use the U-form organisational structure which was regarded

as a strong centralised structure. There was no doubt that this structure supported a lot in the early stage of enterprise development, but it began to affect the speed to respond the market and cause the problem of inflexible organisation with the rapid expansion of business scale (Qian et al., 2006).

The change implementation in LT enterprise also affected the individual stakeholder motivation. The staff union, however, was caring more about employee development than the project and focusing on the potential negative influence of the change implementation on them. The project also affects the employees who had worked in the current working condition for years and had difficulties to accept the change. Finally, in the use of resources aspect, LT had limited budget for the change project. In addition, Lewin's Force field analysis is a useful management method proposed by (Bozak, 2003). Force field is a physical concept that anything in a stable condition is in a field of force where the acting-forces and the counterforces are balanced. Hence, it is necessary to change the state of equilibrium to move ahead by increasing impetus or reducing resistance if the organisational change will take place (ibid.). Swanson & Creed (2014) state that the implementation of change may fail due to the driving forces is much weaker than the constraining forces, which indicates that it is essential to map out the existing drivers and constraints before the change has been processed. After identified the drivers and constraints of the change implementation, it is necessary to use force field analysis to represent how these forces against each other and the stronger force will come with the longer arrow (See Table 1).

Table 1: Perceived Drivers and Constraints of Change Project in LT Enterprise

Drivers	Constraints
Policy support →	Bureaucratic culture ←
Economic downturn →	Strong centralised structure ←
local government seeks for the better service provider →	Staff union cares the negative influence of change on employees ←
Rapid development of information technology and E-governance →	Some employees who worked for years would resist to change ←
Business expansion →	Limited budget for the project ←
Higher educated and skilled employees →	Limited time for implementation ←
CEO is experienced in market development →	
Abundant partners in the industry →	

2.3 Cost and Benefit Analysis

The cost benefit analysis is a systematic approach to assess the project value through comparing the total cost and benefits associated with the project (Jones et al., 2014). It is involved in the decision-making process of the organisation to achieve the most benefit with the least cost (French et al., 2005). One of the benefits that focused by the LT in the "Client-Centred Project" is to retain the current customers especially the local government departments. However, it is encountered the issues of the high cost of implementing the project. Also, the local government may plan to save the cost of developing e-government system to choose the other similar service provider but with a better price. The second benefit is to improve the performance of the turnover as is stated that the company has expanded the business scale and wanted to achieve further development. The third benefit is to have an updated organisational structure for LT to timely perceive and react to the change in the market. However, this may cause the loss of some employees because there should be some positions and units in the company are going to be adjusted or even merged during the process of implementing change initiative. Also, the cause of losing

employees can be the new norms and values created by the new structure does not meet their expectation. The last benefit is to have more skills employees are empowered to be involved in the decision-making process as well as make contributions to solve problems.

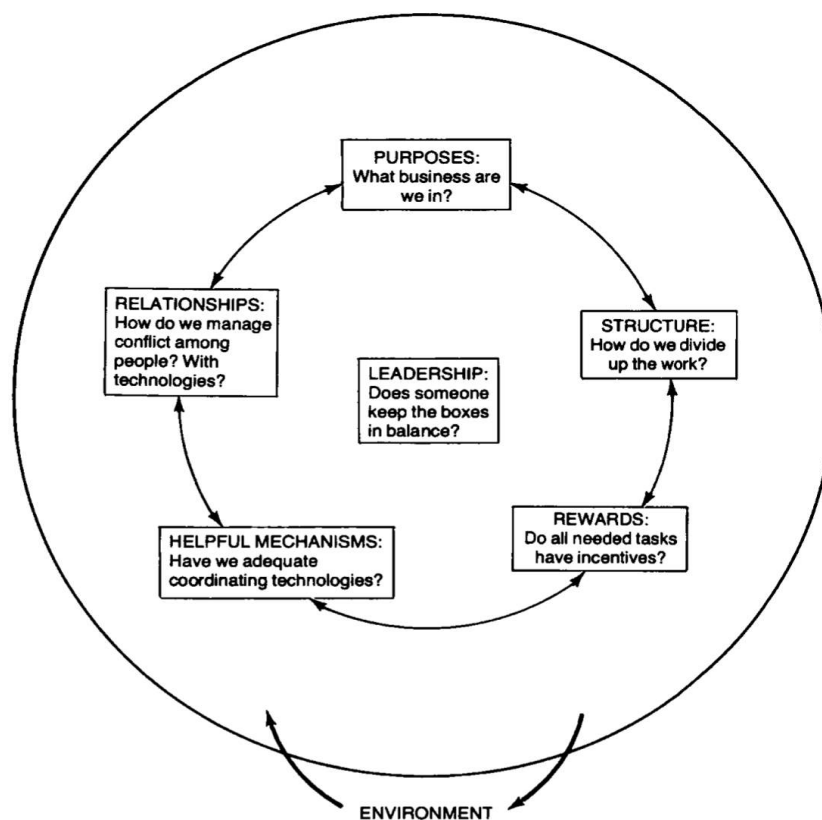
3. Assessment of Change Project in LT based on Six Box Model

3.1 Six Box Model as Organisational Diagnose Model

Organisations are systematically interacted with unpredictable environment which promotes them to execute the rapid change to stay competitive (Armenakis & Harris, 2009; Errida & Lotfi, 2021). Thus, this means that the organisations need to introduce organisational diagnosis as a strategy which can assess the current situation of the organisations from different dimensions for planning and implementing the change initiative (Kume & Leskaj, 2015). The effective diagnosis can provide guidance for the organisations of the right way to decide the appropriate change interventions (Rahimi et al., 2011).

Several models have been suggested in the previous literature as a framework to direct organisational diagnosis (Armenakis & Harris, 2009; Kontić, 2012). For this paper, the Weisbord's six-box model is considered to assess the change implementation of LT enterprise. This model is a general framework can be applied to identify the operational functions of the organisations, which has been widely used in different sorts of organisations, based on the techniques and assumptions in organisational development (Kontić, 2012; Saleem & Ghani, 2017; Ahn & Kwon, 2018). This framework represents the specific method of having a review on the structure and its design of the organisations. It further lays emphasis on the aspects of incentive and rewards system, planning and development, corporate competitions, hierarchy, and empowerment (Rahimi et al., 2011).

Figure 1: Six Box Organisational Diagnosis Model



As is shown in Figure 2, the model categories the organisational activities into six dimensions including purpose, structure, relationship, reward, leadership and helpful mechanism (Saleem & Ghani, 2017). The purpose dimension is focusing on organisational mission and the values created by the organisation, which is regarded as the important part at the beginning of organisational diagnosis (Ahn & Kwon, 2018). The structure dimension is reviewing the current organisational structure whether it is effective for supporting the organisational goals. The relationship dimension is paying attention to the collaboration and interaction among the internal units in the organisation. The rewards category concerns motivation and incentive methods whether it is leading the positive effect on the performance of the employees. The leadership dimension is

putting attentions to the contributions of leaders and top management team in the organisations. It is regarded as a key part in balancing other dimensions in the centre of the model, because the efforts put by leaders are determining the direction for the organisation to grow and largely develop (Kontić, 2012). The helpful mechanism evaluates the supporting system such as budgeting and risk control involved in running the organisation (Saleem & Ghani, 2013).

3.2 Assessment of Change Project in LT

The change project in LT is assessed through several dimensions that aligned with the Weisbord's six box model of organisational change. Regarding the purpose dimension, LT enterprise transformed from a simple technical service provider to become the expert of improving working efficiency around their clients as well as to provide the high-end solutions for technical issues. LT hoped that the employees and technician could be inspired by the great mission. Nevertheless, the actual status was the organisation be questioned to recognise who would be improving work efficiency. This feeling was coming out from the complaint of the employees that the company had not yet put the updating office equipment and environment on schedule. Also, to provide high-end technical solutions means extra challenging tasks had been added to technical employees sometimes even took many their personal time to finish the tasks, which reduce the working passion.

In the structure dimension, LT enterprise planned to design a flexible organisational structure to activate the dynamic capability for further development as well as timely reaction to the change in the market. However, the traditional centralised one was still operating among the leaders and managers in the enterprise. As a result, the running of dual structure sometimes caused the chaos in the daily works especially for the managers in the middle management level of the enterprise. They were asked to directly face the market and the customers to create customer-orientated value follow by flexible structure while in the enterprise they should follow the traditional pyramid structure when reporting to the leaders and top management team.

This could be linked to the relationship dimension that the enterprise expected to form a special project team for implementing the change initiative from the departments of marketing, administrative and project as was stated before. Nevertheless, this was the first time for the company attempted to deploy the employees to form these units which lack communication among them except the required connection on business. This cause that the team members from different units need time to adapt the working pace with each other, which increased the work pressure to them in an invisible way.

In the reward dimension, the project did not include the clear statement of the rewards for the employees, but it could be regarded as the training and development of them because LT wanted to get the employees involved in the corporate affairs to undertake more responsibilities and be able to deal with more complex tasks after streamlined the organisational structure. However, it seemed not enough for the employees especially the marketing staff and project technicians because they were working at the frontline and direct contact with the market and the customers. As was stated before, they required some specific incentive rewards for the transitional period of implementing the change initiative because they were being allocated more tasks.

In the leadership dimension, shareholders of LT approved the implementation after the CEO tried his best to persuade as well as put many efforts to support the project at the beginning stage, which gave a great hand to move the change initiative ahead. Nevertheless, there was a different voice on board as the project progresses. Some directors had gradually stopped supporting the project due to the consideration of the LT was still in the growing stage with the relevant small scale. Also, the lack of business investment opportunities might miss because of the high cost and limited time of the change initiative.

In the aspect of the helpful mechanisms, LT enterprise firstly redesigned the methods of assessing staff performance as well as modified the entry requirement for the application of some relevant positions associated with the change project. Then the second one was to build a learning culture to enhance the integration of individual learning and organisational ones. In addition, the enterprise provided the training session at the organisational level to make sure that every manager and employee could understand the purpose of project implementation and change initiative. However, this was suggested by some employees that it might combine with both online and offline form as a hybrid approach due to the increased workload.

4. Evaluation of Challenges and Strategies

4.1 Challenges

According to the assessment of change project in LT based on the six box model of organisational diagnose, it could be

observed that the enterprise confronted several challenges in the process of promoting their change initiative. The biggest challenge was the top management team expected to solve issues in a relatively short period of time through one change project only. As a result, LT put large efforts to redesign the organisational structure. However, this blurred the big picture and original thought of the change initiative that the customers-oriented strategy as the core of the project, which was a sort of unreality. As is stated by Tsoukas & Chia (2002) that the organisational change is continuous and planned process with clear objectives. If the purpose cannot be explicitly stated, the change may have resulted in failure.

The second main challenge was that some shareholders and directors on the board began to stop supporting the implementation of the change project. They hoped to cut cost on the change of organisational structure while worried about the continuous input to the project might have an influence on losing other investments opportunities. This caused them to put less attention and efforts on the project and gradually lose the position in the mind of the top management team. Although their supports made positive outcomes, the uncertainty remained in the afterwards change implementation.

Another main challenge was that the resistance of the employees. As was stated before, the change brought the increased work pressure to the employees especially for those were working in the marketing and project units. Some employees complained that they were asked to work hard to provide better service for the clients, but the enterprise did less to improve the work environment. Nevertheless, the employees were regarded as one of the potential participants in the original thought of the project. They felt while not being treated as the main recipients. In addition, there was not clear to mention the reward and allowance for the change implementation, which caused the voice as the change project means more work.

4.2 Strategies

Organisational change is a long-term process which cannot be done overnight (Burnes & Jackson, 2011; Shaw, 2017). A rush for a fast result may cause the organisation and the employees are unable to adapt to the new environment. Thus, for this case, there are some effective strategies that LT could concern to develop and implement the project and change initiative in a better approach. First, the top management team of LT should strengthen informal communication with the employees. Resistance and anxiety will be reduced if the employees have a clearer view on the big picture of the change initiative and the deeper understanding on the future development of the enterprise based on the appropriate communication mechanism (Klarner et al., 2011). This leads them using the new vision to cope with the challenges and recognise individual potential of self-development through online and offline training sessions in a hybrid approach that associated with the goal of change project. Second, it is important for the LT to declare attitude of implementing change by improving reward system. To raise more powers and arouse attention among the employees, the enterprise provides rewards for those who will be supporting the change. Reward can involve the material incentives from the financial aspect or recognition in the process of promotion as the non-financial aspect. Third, LT needs to have a review on the change of structure associated with the change project, as running the dual approach causes issue in the daily operation. A flexible organisational structure can eliminate the obstacles and enable every section to be coordinated with each other to create the values for the entire organisation (Král and Králová, 2016).

5. Conclusion

Organisational change is regarded as a long-term process that hardly be achieved instantly (Errida & Lotfi, 2021). Rushing the process results in a failure to adapt for both employees and the organisation, especially for SMEs with limited resources, it is not sustainable to put forward all aspects of involvements into the change project. The evidence from the case study of LT as a high-tech enterprise in China based on six box model suggests that the success of organisational change project is built through the contributions of both strategic organisational and certain human resource practices. The most important point is the balance of the interests among different stakeholders during the process of change to reduce the resistance of change. Moreover, flexible structure transformation is needed when the organisation in the stage of business expansion to stimulate the vitality of employees and mobilise their potentials in the change project. Finally, place people ahead as the critical concern in the organisational change project through personalised human resource practices like hybrid training options and reward management. This provides the employees a clearer picture of the change direction and gain a sense of achievement.

Funding

no

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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