



## Strategies for Successful Change Implementation: Insights from Senior Business Leaders

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### ABSTRACT

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Approximately 75% of organizations' change initiatives fail to attain the expected results, affecting business growth and survival. Grounded in Lewin's three-step Model of Change, this qualitative multiple-case study explored strategies senior business leaders used to implement positive change. The participants were five senior business leaders who successfully experienced positive change management in their organizations. Data were collected from face-to-face semistructured interviews and various organizational documents and analyzed using Yin's five-phase analysis technique. The three business strategies for successful change implementation that emerged from data analysis were improving leadership support, implementing clear communication, and sustaining an influential organizational culture. A key recommendation was that open and effective communication allowed employees to understand the benefits of change and helped them embrace it. The implications for a positive social change included the potential for continued business growth and increased employment opportunities in the local communities.

### Keywords:

Change initiative, positive change, business strategies, effective communication.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

It is more practical for senior business leaders to implement measures or strategies that enable employees to accept and embrace organizational changes. Understanding the benefits of having and developing an agile team capable of adapting and incorporating change is crucial to sustaining an organization's success. However, managing change is complex and challenging, especially dealing with deep-rooted habits [1]. According to Anusi and Mutambara [1], change is a phenomenon that may occur at any time during an organization's survivability. Therefore, regardless of organization size and structure, business leaders or managers should continuously and vigorously pursue innovation,

improvement, and promotion of business activities to overcome various market challenges and predict economic trends [2]. Real managers should also anticipate and analyze customer behaviors, new technology and its impacts, market barriers, and opportunities [3]. Overcoming these challenges and mastering market pressures will prevent failure and ensure business development and continuity. Therefore, implementing new business processes and operations becomes an effective managerial tool for an organization's survival and sustainability.

Moreover, failure to implement and adapt to change could harm a business's longevity. Therefore, senior business leaders must understand the change management process that aligns with appropriate prescriptive strategies [4, 5]. The critical significance of change management cannot be overemphasized, particularly with the impact of globalization on the economy and customer satisfaction. Understanding where and when to make the necessary changes are critical to businesses' survivability [6]. Furthermore, implementing positive social changes should ensure the company operates

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efficiently while facing turbulent market environmental challenges.

According to Luamba et al. [5], change management continuously alters and modifies organizational structure, capabilities, and processes to serve customers better while maximizing and improving the company's bottom line. He et al. [7] defined change management as an organization's ability to alter its strategies, operations, management systems, governance structure, and decision-support capabilities to withstand perturbations and disruptions promptly and appropriately. Luamba et al. [4] investigated the retail industries' change management and concluded that precise approaches are required to successfully implement change to achieve performance levels beyond organizations' current capability. Simultaneously, several researchers have demonstrated that implementing change may be challenging to reaching desired outcomes [2, 4, 6]. Furthermore, many change initiatives fail because some managers or leaders lack effective strategies to administer change processes successfully [2, 3, 4]. Then, business leaders should assess and identify their organizational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) to prepare their teams to embrace change better [3, 4].

### **1. Analysis and Synthesis of Lewin's Theory of Change**

The conceptual framework that guided this study was Lewin's Three-step Change Model, which Lewin introduced in 1947. Lewin formulated the three-step model concept to implement change in individual or group behaviors in the organization. Lewin's approach is based on achieving successful organizational change and advocates for (a) organizational structure, (b) new behaviors, attitudes, and motivations, and (c) a planned approach to change [8, 9]. The critical tenets of Lewin's theory of change are (a) unfreezing, (b) changing, and (c) refreezing [10]. Unfreezing is the first stage of the change model, and it involves preparing individuals or organizations to become aware of the proposed changes [11]. According to Lewin, the unfreezing stage is a prep stage that guides and conditions employees to the coming changes before putting them into motion. The second stage of Lewin's change model is the changing step, which is the actual process of incorporating the changes by putting the plans into action and having everyone in the team act in ways that support the new direction the organization intends to take. Finally, refreezing is the last stage of the change model, which occurs when all the personnel grows confident, have embraced the new ways of working, and are comfortable in the work positions. Per Lewin [10], the three-stage change management model is widely considered the theoretical foundation of planned changes on which business managers or leaders should rely to administer successful change processes better.

Lewin's change model is widely accepted as a framework for implementing and managing planned organizational change initiatives [9, 10]. According to Lewin, the change model allows researchers to critically examine patterns of individual or group behaviors and the surrounding environments, which may help to identify barriers to change and find practical solutions to yield positive change implementation outcomes [10]. Miceli et al. [9] argued that Lewin's classical three-step model was built as a main frame for understanding behaviors and psychological forces of change. Furthermore, Miceli et al. [9] added that Lewin's change model provides appropriate tips and recommendations for analyzing the change process by identifying forces that either move the change forward or provide barriers to the change. Similarly, Kump [8] opined that Lewin's change model is crucial to analyze the relations between the positive forces that promote change and the hostile forces that attempt to keep the status quo.

The underlying assumption of the change management process involves employees' and employers' motivation to implement and accept changes. Influencing factors of change can be facilitated by driving or restraining the forces of change. Per Lewin [10], driving forces of change are positive forces associated with encouraging and controlling forces related to opposing or hostile forces that discourage change. As employees are the hub of every organizational change, a fundamental change will only occur when there is employee motivation [10]. Therefore, any successful change in structures, groups, processes, rewards systems, or job designs requires employees' total buy-in and involvement to be successful [11]. As applied to this study, Lewin's three-step Model of Change was an appropriate framework to effectively explore senior business leaders' strategies to implement and maintain successful change management initiatives. Lewin's three-step model was instrumental in providing direction on effectively executing changes. Also, Lewin's model provides the basis for understanding the organizational change process and how to design, deploy, and initiate a successful change implementation.

To sum up, Lewin's three-step Model of Change was appropriate to use as the conceptual framework for this study because constant economic changes have forced many organizational leaders to reconstruct their businesses to remain viable in the marketplace. When companies face change, some employees resist, and their behaviors toward the organization become negative. Hastings et al. [12] added that employees could overcome resistance when managers use clear communications that include active listening and accept alternative ways, such as team members' feedback while implementing change initiatives. According to Lewin, employees instinctively resist change, gravitate towards what is known, and seek comfort zones. Employees' lack of participation and the fear of abandoning what has worked in

the past usually challenges successful change implementation. Lewin aimed to simplify change management strategy based on his studies and maintain positive behaviors among employees. Leaders should create a positive work environment that promotes trust between employers and employees. Lewin's theory of change was used to outline specific principles that helped top senior organizational leaders implement positive behaviors and encourage changes for organizational success.

## **2. Transformational and Transactional Leadership**

Leadership is critical in change implementation, establishing a positive work environment, and leading to creativity [13]. Luamba et al. [4] argued that leaders must motivate employees to reach the desired business outcomes. Chagadama et al. [3] added that leaders or managers who use an appropriate leadership style can influence followers to accept change. Singh et al. [13] also opined that positive change is achievable when the management teams are participative, informative, and fair. As leadership roles differ from leaders' views and organizational nature, organization leaders must be adaptive and persuasive to implement change [14]. Beauty and Aigbogun [14] also claimed that transactional or transformational leadership styles are necessary to achieve a successful organizational change.

There are different leadership styles, each proving effective depending on the given circumstances, attitudes, beliefs, preferences, and values of the people involved. The various leadership styles can affect employees differently, causing positive or negative change implementation [15]. Many leadership styles have been proposed for organizational change implementation, including transformational, transactional, autocratic, democratic, task-oriented, and relationship-oriented [16]. Furthermore, according to Kumari et al. [17], different leadership styles are appropriate in other circumstances, and a leader's leadership style significantly influences the success of change initiatives. However, this study focused only on transformational and transactional leadership styles. Several researchers argued that when it comes to embarking on change initiatives within an organization, transformational or transactional is the more suitable to tackle such change processes [16, 17].

**3.1 Transformational Leadership Style.** The transformational leadership style suits an organization embarking on a change initiative focusing on managing employees' well-being and motivation to comply with policies, procedures, and change implementation. How can they be motivated during the change implementation [16]? Beauty and Aigbogun [14] described a transformational leader as a trustworthy and charismatic guide who encourages subordinates to focus on accomplishing organizational goals. In support, Bagga et al. [18] used a survey from 118 respondents among I.T. professionals in Delhi/ India to

analyze the relationship between transformational leadership, organizational culture, and change management. Bagga et al. [18] found that transformational leadership contributed to implementing a sound organizational culture which helped all stakeholders successfully adapt to change in the production processes. Therefore influential leaders should explore transformational leadership traits to inspire subordinates to forget previous assumptions, values, and traditions and invest in innovative ideas. Additionally, leaders can influence the development of values and structures that affect people's positive attitudes toward learning new methods or processes [17].

Moreover, Fischer and Sitkin [16] argued that transformational leaders aim to encourage followers to exceed in their performance. Kumari et al. [17] also reported that anything that employees undertake while doing their job should always align with the vision or mission of the organization. Therefore, a transformational leader should innovate new ideas that boost productivity and profitability [14]. In addition, Roesminingsih and Trihantoyo [19] examined transformational leadership and its impact on teachers' commitment to organizational change in East Java elementary schools. The study results revealed that transformational leadership and teacher commitment positively impacted organizational change in elementary schools. It becomes clear that transformational leaders are proactive and change-driver agents who inspire subordinates to excel in their jobs while supporting their organizations' missions [18].

**3.2. Transactional Leadership Style.** Transactional leadership is a reward-based style, which means that the more effort an employee puts into an activity to meet organizational goals, the more is rewarded [11]. Kumari et al. [17] described transactional leadership as the swap of actions citing tasks between employees and leaders. Furthermore, to confirm the effect of transactional leadership, Nwakoby [20] used questionnaires of 112 respondents to examine the impact of transactional leadership styles on employee productivity in Nigerian pharmaceutical companies. In his conclusion, Nwakoby [2] found a significant positive relationship between transactional leadership styles and employee productivity. Bagga et al. [18] added that using a compensation strategy stimulates employees to be more proactive, primarily in organizations that face colossal competition.

Transactional leadership focuses on establishing employee roles and responsibilities based on their performance. As performance can be positive or negative, transactional leaders should consider using positive or negative rewards [17]. For instance, unproductive employees should not be rewarded positively. Per Fischer and Sitkin [16], transactional leaders are goal-oriented and achieve their goals by closely monitoring subordinates, intervening,

rewarding desired behaviors and outcomes, and punishing undesirable behaviors. Transactional leaders should proactively encourage employees during change initiatives to reinforce and enhance alignment with organizational expectations [18]. It is worth noting that a transactional leadership style rewards performant employees for increasing the motivation of those who are not performant to meet the organization's expectations [6]. As a reward-based system, a transactional leadership style is paramount to increasing job satisfaction and achieving high performance.

### **3. Change Implementation Initiatives**

As leaders' primary goal is to meet organizational expectations, they should be flexible and know how or have strategies to implement changes that affect operations, products, and employee behaviors. Flexibility is essential because it will keep employees aware of their organization's competitiveness [16]. Organizational change directly affects employees regardless of the reason for the change, whether related to new technologies, regulations, or human resources [17]. It does not matter if it is organization-wide or restricted to one team; people often struggle to embrace and resist change. Many individuals assume that change will lead to staffing cuts, pay reductions, or team restructuring that may negatively impact the organization's missions [6, 16]. However, per Kumari et al. [17], change is a concept that may foster apprehension of creativity in an employee or a business. Luamba et al. [4] also pointed out that innovation changes can be a struggle for business managers or leaders to learn and understand how to improve business activities to be more competitive. To better implement change, business managers or leaders should use clear communication or dialog to help employees understand the benefits of change in the organization.

Innovative or creative ideas should be strategic for business leaders to sustain organization longevity and productivity. Leadership innovation should be the essence of the company's culture that managers or leaders should rely on to improve success and attenuate obstacles that cause fear of change [5]. In stressful situations, organizations need supportive leaders to establish a foundation that fosters cohesion by rendering employees guidance and continuous inspirational support [16]. Some researchers have realized that a supportive leader's attributes align with the transformational leadership concept to construct and sustain emotional motivation [11, 16]. To promote innovative change, leaders must support, inspire, and maintain a transparent collaboration between leaders and employees.

The role of leaders may have a significant influence on how employees and stakeholders respond to change. In a conducive and positive working environment, leaders should promote trust between employers and employees [18]. Burnes [11] argued that supportive leaders could implement change and create a healthy work environment that may

inspire employees to improve their performance. When implementing innovative change and maintaining a competitive advantage, supportive leaders should have a determined strategy to involve all employees in aligning with the business goals [17]. Thus, to increase employee empowerment should be strategic to provide new opportunities for employees to expand their knowledge and skills. In addition, active leaders should use strategies such as implementing technical job training to empower employees. Furthermore, assessing employees' educational backgrounds and competencies should also be considered by top leaders when assigning responsibilities or filling structural positions.

Moreover, to stimulate meaningful change, leaders can take advantage of a range of tools and techniques that stakeholders can offer. Some researchers suggested that influential leaders should have strategic plans or methods to maintain a competitive advantage [6, 17, 18]. Some other analysts discovered that transformational leaders who engaged and interested all organizational stakeholders to participate in the change processes had the chance to increase performance [11, 13]. Being receptive to the stakeholders and allowing them to convey their ideas can yield a change in a transformative way rather than unprogressive-constant communication. For instance, when change initiatives fail, a lack of clear communication from the leadership team is often the culprit. Per Kumari et al. [17], the initial conversation with stakeholders concerning change must yield mechanisms to uncover potential resistance. Leaders can recognize or implement changes while adopting effective strategies that stakeholders understand and apply to benefit the organizations.

### **4. Qualitative Methodology**

According to Chagadama et al. [3], the qualitative methodology helps explore the phenomenon analyzed by participants who have experienced the phenomenon. Therefore, researchers may use qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods to analyze a phenomenon [2]. For this study, we used the qualitative approach because it was crucial to identify and explore practical business strategies from senior business leaders who successfully experienced and implemented organizational changes. On the other hand, the quantitative method that characterizes and analyzes relationships among variables [2] was not helpful for this study because we did not test or explore the relationship between variables. Finally, the mixed method, which combines both qualitative and quantitative methods [2], was also inappropriate because we did not test hypotheses to analyze the implementation of change in organizations.

Also, several designs, such as (a) case study, (b) phenomenology, (c) ethnography, and (d) narrative, were under consideration. However, the case study was appropriate for this study because it was helpful to explore in-depth the phenomenon analyzed [2]. Phenomenology design that

explores participants' personal experiences or ethnographic designs that explore participants' cultures, behavior, or beliefs [2] was not appropriate for this study because we did not examine the meanings of participants' personal experiences or cultures. The narrative design, which focuses on exploring individuals' personal life experiences [3], was also inappropriate because this study's purpose was not to focus on narrating participants' life stories.

### 5. Participants

The selection of appropriate participants and data collection through interview questions are sometimes challenging to respond appropriately to the research question [21]. Yin [21] suggested that effective participants should meet the researcher's eligibility criteria to provide crucial information related to the study. Participants were selected using the purposive sampling method based on their experience implementing organizational changes. To identify and select participants for this multiple case study, we used the internet and Google search engine to gain insight into the companies, SBA database, and official government sources for potential participants in the DMV area, including Washington, DC, Maryland, and Virginia. The initial sample included five senior business leaders with over five years of business experience from different industries. Participants agreed to participate freely without any compensation

**Table 1**

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Year of Business Experience</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Type of Industry</i>
P1	10	M.D.	Construction
P2	7	V.A.	Consulting
P3	5	DC	NGO
P4	8	V.A.	Construction
P5	8	D.C.	Law Firm

#### *Demographic Data of Participants*

Note.

VA=Virginia

MD=Maryland

DC=Washington DC

P=Participants (1, 2,...,4)

### 6. Data Collection and Analysis

#### 6.1. Data Collection

The research question of this study was: What successful strategies have senior business leaders used to implement and drive change management initiatives for high performance? Five interview questions were conducted in person at the participants' offices using six face-to-face semistructured interview questions. The six interview questions were: (a) What strategies did senior leaders use to develop and oversee change management that allowed to

increase in performance? (b) How did senior leaders assess the effectiveness of the critical change management strategies? (c) What strategies did senior leaders use to encourage staff participation in the change management initiatives? (d) What were the critical challenges encountered while implementing the change management initiative? (e) How did the senior leaders address the challenges during the change implementation stages? (f) What other information do you want to share regarding successful change implementation?

Participants were informed about the study's primary goal and received all information regarding their rights and responsibilities before the interview, which lasted 30 to 45 minutes. According to [22], using semistructured interviews enables the researcher to obtain reliable information and better understand participants' perspectives of the research topic. After the interviews, we used member-checking for data validity and credibility.

#### 6.2. Data Analysis

As highlighted by Yin [21], data analysis consisted of five distinct processes, which were as follows: (a) data compiling, (b) disassembling of data into subsets, (c) reassembling data into patterns/themes, (d) interpreting of the data, and (e) developing of conclusions. To Analyze data, we used NVivo 12. NVivo 12 is a software used in qualitative research to code and categorize data according to emerging themes and data similarities. We also used data triangulation for research consistency by collecting data from different sources, such as companies' internal documentation and technical reports on business operations and processes. Yin [21] added that analyzing multiple in-depth sources such as technical, financial, or managerial reports may help explore other hidden causes of firms' weaknesses or strengths. After collecting data from field notes, semistructured interviews, and company sources, we confirmed that data saturation had occurred after interviewing the fifth participant.

### 7. Presentation of Findings

#### 7.1. Theme 1: Improving Leadership Support

The first theme that emerged was improving leadership support. Each participant stated that leadership support was a significant problem and emphasized encouraging and inspiring employees during change initiatives. The participants also disclosed that employees exhibited a positive attitude toward innovative change when there was active, supportive leadership. For example, P1 explained that "change is hard for everyone to accept. It is a natural human reaction to resist an unknown fact. However, when leaders assist and support employees, resistance to change decreases." P4 stated, "Sometimes we accepted the resistance from employees because we wanted to keep everyone happy and the workflow going. Instead, we looked at the philosophy behind innovation. As a result,

we made changes for our customers and organization". P3 disclosed, "All stakeholders agreed that successful change initiatives start with leadership supporting and having a training and coaching plan helped sustain the change." All participants agreed that having adequate support from the leadership team helped employees understand a new way of doing things. Also, all participants agreed that the role played by the leadership team while explaining new technology was constructive in educating and mentoring employees to understand new technology. Furthermore, P1 asserted that "we implemented and facilitated hands-on training until employees became familiar with the change." With implementing a new system, employees experienced one-on-one support from leaders and hands-on training.

Supporting and training employees is crucial to better understanding job expectations. Participants attested that employees felt comfortable with the changes because the leadership team was always nearby to encourage and support them to embrace the change processes. P1 added, "being supportive is great, but we must also be vigilant and know when to make the necessary adjustments for innovation." P3 and P5 echoed that leaders should conduct evaluations of the change implementations and determine the need for additional training and support. P4 further explained that receiving employee feedback after any activity helped assess new change processes. As Burnes [11] stated, leaders should continue to measure the implementation process for improvement because employees are usually scared of or do not want to change. So when executing change, leaders must follow up to understand how the employees think or perceive changes outside the organization.

Moreover, P2 stated that "learning is a win/win situation for both employers and employees." P3 recommended that leaders appoint a management committee to train employees and promote a learning culture. For P3, the management committee, which may be internal or external, could enhance morale and loyalty and improve overall efficiency. All participants and senior business leaders agreed that the strategy to enhance change was essential to combine training and mentoring through the change processes. The participants also recommended that all business leaders use training and mentorship to successfully implement change initiatives, enhance productivity, and sustain business longevity.

#### **Correlation to the literature.**

The findings noted in Theme 1 consisted of improving leadership support as an effective strategy during change implementation processes to meet organizational goals. All participants indicated that supporting employees through innovative changes provided opportunities for employees to embrace changes. However, leadership styles vary based on the nature and mission of each organization to

meet organizational culture [16]. Also, business leaders pointed out that adapting to changes resulted in successfully implementing change initiatives. As supportive leadership is the foundation for decreasing resistance to change and increasing innovation, changes should be permanent and open to all employees [14]. In a positive working atmosphere, employees trust the leadership team and believe in the organization's missions and visions [18].

#### **Correlation to the conceptual framework.**

According to [19] findings regarding the transformational leadership approach, the organization became more effective while implementing change initiatives that led to success. It becomes clear that based on the conceptual framework, supportive leadership is strategic to implementing change initiatives. The findings from Bagga et al. [18] also indicated that leaders who support and motivate employees to accept organizational changes have more chances to succeed. All senior business leaders agreed that using Lewin's Three-step Change Model was crucial to help all employees comply with change principles. Participants also agreed that Lewin's Three-step Change Model efficiently sustained changes even during a hard time of the pandemic situation of COVID-19. Then, business leaders must always be more available, vigilant, and supportive to motivate followers to reach the organizations' missions.

#### **7.2. Theme 2: Implementing Clear Communication**

The second theme from the interviews was using clear and balanced communication while communicating with employees during change implementation processes. All senior business leaders believed that unbiased and clear communication was strategic to develop and implement successful change initiatives. Therefore, they implemented clear communication from interview questions 2, 5, 6, and 7. Senior business leaders further expressed that effective communication with employees offers critical business insights and enhances employees' experience to change initiatives. All senior business leaders agreed that employees understood change processes while openly discussing the change initiatives' purpose. For instance, P1 explained, "We informed our employees during the open weekly meeting of the five-year plan for costs reduction and explained the benefit of acquiring new technology. After that, we asked everyone to say something. From employee feedback, we received a new constructive idea about the fundamental level and location that needed changes. Everyone agreed, which helped the organization reduce cost more than planned." P2 and P5 agreed on the importance of good communication in the change processes. They attested that good communication contributed to speaking the same language and sharing the

same ideas within the organization. P4 added, "We placed change initiatives on a pedestal, generating employee conversation. Also, the company allowed employees to convey and share their message and perception regarding the change initiative in their languages. Sharing ideas helped overcome challenging situations and improve the commitment to the change processes".

All participants agreed that sharing the change initiative experience during the meeting improved the understanding of some projects because employees could ask questions and get answers directly from senior business leaders. P3 pointed out that "without a clear communication, there is confusion ." P3 added that using various forms of communication, such as emails, weekly correspondence, and weekly team meetings, allowed employees to have an ongoing clarity of the purpose of the changes and how to implement them. Finally, P4 shared the experience of using internal socio-media communication to implement change initiatives. For P4, social media was critical in explaining changes and receiving timely stakeholder feedback. P1 and P2 added that motivating employees to give feedback in open dialog allowed them to be more open to suggestions and increased their in-depth understanding of achieving the change initiatives. As Singh et al. [13] stated, excellent and clear communication is fundamental to employees' involvement in change's success.

**Correlation to the literature.** Improving communication was consistent for both employers and employees to share experiences. Kamuri et al. [17] argued that employees might feel empowered to complete their tasks and take ownership of their assignments with clear communication and directive. In addition, Chagadama et al. [3] also opined that good communication between leaders and employees during a change process should be one of the leaders' daily tasks to ensure job compliance. Per Luamba et al. [4], leaders should communicate timely and provide valid information to increase employee motivation and involvement while implementing change initiatives.

**Correlation to the conceptual framework.** Influential leaders should have the ability to communicate consistently. According to Chagadama et al. [3] and Nwakoby [20], leaders should maintain open dialog while encouraging employees to embrace changes. Moreover, the authors argued that change initiative explanations should be shared with employees in various forms, such as weekly emails, letters, face-to-face meetings, and telephone calls. Fischer and Sitkin [16] added that creating positive and constant communication concerning organizational change should promote trust, employee retention, and increased productivity. Lewin's Three-step Change Model combined with transformational leadership theory should be a

managerial tool that leaders need to inspire change initiatives and encourage employees to accept ownership of the changes.

### **7.3. Theme 3: Sustaining Organizational Culture**

Senior business leaders or participants in this study pointed out that the organization's culture positively influenced change initiatives. All participants agreed that organizational culture was related to the organization's mission and values because corporate culture helped employees to understand the need and purpose of change initiative processes. For instance, P1 explained that "the strategy to promote the organizational culture helped build an organizational identity. As a result, employees comprehend the need to extend new market opportunities and overcome competition barriers. Hence the need to introduce new products or services." P2 indicated that "when employees clearly understand the mission and values of the organization, they adhere easily to the organization culture and comply with policies." P3 stated that "implementation of change must include and be mindful of existing organizational culture. Therefore, when implementing change, it is paramount that leaders recognize the challenges their employees are facing and show genuine commitment to assisting them in adapting to changes while also reinforcing organizational culture.

In addition, leadership should be mindful that their employees' understanding and learning levels may differ. P4 echoed that "business leaders must exercise caution while implementing changes because failure to align with organizational policies and missions may negatively affect changes or opt for change resistance. Moreover, all participants explained that a good understanding of organizational values and culture is fundamental to supporting change processes at all levels of organizational change. The corporate culture encompasses how employees interact, resist specific changes, and share knowledge. Senior business leaders must ensure employees understand well and accept change initiatives. Senior business leaders also have the mission to continually build and implement an influential organizational culture [16].

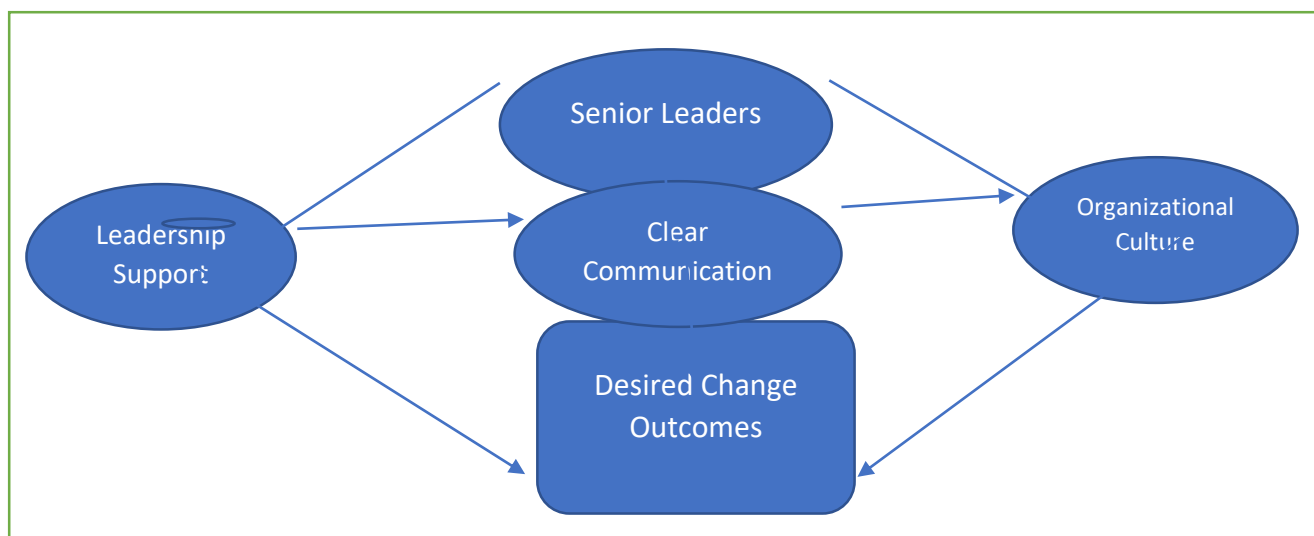
**Correlation to the literature.** Strengthening organizational culture aligns with the findings of Chagadama et al. [3]. Chagadama [3] argued that leaders should lead by example and motivate employees to embrace the change initiative. Leaders should also minimize employee resistance to accepting change [12]. All business leaders or participants in this study disclosed that understanding the organization's mission and values was vital to implementing organizational change and strengthening the development culture. Planning change initiatives with clear objectives are crucial for business managers to meet the

organization's missions. Bagga et al.[18] argued that real managers should build a solid communicational relationship between employees and employers to strengthen or promote the culture of the organizations.

**Correlation to the conceptual framework.**

Leaders may stimulate organizational change by nourishing the work environment for employees to think beyond the organization. Leaders or managers should use transformational leadership to support the organization's values, missions, and visions [17]. As employees are the

company's backbone or primary production capital, organizational leaders should ensure a positive culture to promote retention and productivity. Burnes [11] stated that corporate leaders should use Lewin's Three-step Change Model approach to engage and support the organization's mission and values to increase growth. Lewin [10] echoed that adopting Lewin's Three-step Change Model framework is strategic for business leaders to motivate employees to go beyond their self-interest and improve organizational culture.



**Figure 1. Change Initiative Processes**

**8. Discussion**

The results from this study have provided practical strategies that senior business leaders used to implement change initiatives. The conclusion of this study may benefit other business leaders in the public and private sectors who seek to develop new strategies to reduce costs, retain employees, and improve changes in business processes. Miceli et al. [10] indicated that business leaders should share their experiences to learn from other backgrounds and plan to avoid economic or financial crises. The findings of this study revealed that improving leadership support was significant in aligning skills and effective change initiatives. Also, enhancing stakeholders' involvement in change initiatives helped cultivate an effective change from everyone's feedback. Moreover, improving communication during the change processes was pivotal for conveying the whys behind the changes, which is crucial for sustainable business activities.

Business managers or leaders should consider the desire of individuals, communities, organizations, and institutions to reach satisfaction [3]. Organizational leaders or managers should also develop a corporate culture to sustain growth, increase profitability, enhance the standard of living, boost employment, and improve living conditions for

everyone in the community [8]. The results of this research paper may positively impact social change by allowing business leaders to positively contribute with money or donations to their communities, increase productivity, and reduce financial losses. The implications of this study for a positive social change could also foster more stable employment, which could improve the communities' local economies from income generated by regular jobs. Also, a successful change process could sustain a business to become more competitive and attractive, decrease the cycle of poverty, and improve living standards for people in the local communities. Moreover, a successful change initiative could also positively increase employees' involvement and contribution to building a peaceful work and life environment.

The findings of this study may assist current and future business leaders in using strategies to implement change initiatives successfully. In addition, the recommendations of this study may be beneficial for public and private sectors, employees, and community members to assess business or market demands; and determine the type of change required. Business leaders should (a) improve employee support during the change processes, (b) be actively involved in the change initiative by providing



employees, management team, and stockholders opportunities for feedback while implementing change, (c) communicate the change process clearly and motivate employee engagement in organization values, and (d) strengthen organizational culture to ensure successful change and growth. Moreover, business leaders should improve leadership support and employee input, institute regular meetings to keep the lines of communication open, and strengthen the organization's culture to sustain change initiatives better. Once initiated, resistance to change may decrease, and more employees may trust their leaders in future change initiatives. In addition, Burnes [11] determined that open communication fosters a close-knit working environment, which reduces resistance and acceptance to change.

These multiple qualitative cases aimed to explore business leaders' strategies to implement organizational change. Based on transformational leadership theory, corporate leaders should, for instance, promote intellectual stimulation, inspire motivation, and consider individual needs to implement changes effectively [11]. As recommendations, future researchers could:

- (a) investigate a larger population in other industries to explore whether other organizations have the same strategies to improve businesses' sustainability.
- (b) expand research to a more in-depth study in the United States since change initiatives occur in various industries and organizations.
- (c) Extend participants from other industries to explore strategies for leadership support, stakeholders' involvement, and communication.
- (d) investigate a workforce that is predominantly millennial and multi-generational from different generations and cultures.

## **9. Conclusion**

This qualitative multiple case study explored strategies senior business leaders used to manage and implement organizational change initiatives. The research findings may be relevant to business leaders contemplating reengineering their administrative processes and operations. This study used Lewin's three-step Model of Change theory as a conceptual framework and transformational leadership theory as the supportive theory. Data were collected from five successful senior business leaders in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia who have successfully experienced the management and implementation of change initiatives in their organizations. From NVIVO 12 data analysis, this study found that improving leadership support, enhancing stakeholders' involvement, and improving communication were effective strategies that successfully increased change implementation initiatives. Also, these align with current literature and Lewin's three-step Model of Change theory. All

senior business leaders agreed that the change initiative was challenging to manage or implement. However, exploring the critical factors of change, communicating the effect of the change, supporting, leading by example, involving individuals, and embedding the difference in the organization's culture contributed to meeting positive organizational missions and goals.

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