

IT as the central factor for Change Management

Hannes Gutmeier is the Head of IT, Immofinanz Group, and plays a central role in the dynamics and growth of the company. Having experienced several large projects, he observes that the significance of IT is continuously growing.

IT drives business. IT has always been the 'motor' for Change processes and hence should definitely be part of projects involving external Change Management experts. I gained some insights on IT & Organizational development during a very comprehensive project related to the implementation of ERP systems with Buwog/ESG, an undertaking of the Immofinanz Group.

The change processes are intensively based on IT systems, and hence it is necessary to thoroughly and simultaneously design the procurement processes for IT systems & infrastructure. Changes in the work environment of the employees are inevitable. The changes required depend on the phase of the project at which the company is at the moment and the interventions have to be designed based on that.

The 3 phases are, broadly:

- Focus Imbalance – where the IT amplifies the pressure due to Change
- Focus Reshaping or Restructuring – where IT supports the Change
- Focus Balance – where IT anchors the change

In these phases of Change Management, support has to come both from inside as well as outside. In this case, the company management's full-fledged support of the change as being "Fit for the Future" gave tremendous strength to the process. Doujak Corporate Development gave the project external support and advice. For several years now, Doujak has dealt with the theme "IT drives Business drives Change", and has jointly conceptualized several successful change projects with customers and partners, such as Lufthansa & SAP. The projects have been driven and designed based on IT.

What is the role of Change Management?

- Communication of goals, project milestones, important project steps and mutual alignment of expectations
- Involving all concerned stakeholders in the course of the Change process
- Enabling the joint design & development of the process with the stakeholders
- Support during problem situations
- Consideration of the emotional components of the Change process, both positive (motivation, curiosity, joy, etc) and negative (uncertainty, retrenchments, resistance, fear, etc)
- Allow negative emotions to flow freely
- 'Change is something normal' – People should be convinced of this idea using examples and case-studies of companies which have successfully & sustainably established Change

It should be primarily used to build a bridge between IT, the management and the employees, so that the employees do not get disillusioned that IT would significantly change or control their behavior. It is not about Stakeholder "Integration", but about designing together, and this is possible only by creating an acceptance between the users and the users' actions.

Only then can we expect an impact on the business performance. IT is not an end in itself, but just a tool for the implementation of the company's strategy and is always connected with the change process.

The effects of IT could be different in the different phases of the change process and also depends on the culture of the company. Hence it is very important to find the right partner for setting up the appropriate interventions. Moreover, it is very important to be familiar with the leadership issues such as conflict management, and modify the change process accordingly.

Change often represents a "threat" to the employees. But change could also represent "Chance". If we communicate change as an opportunity and a desire for something new, we will connect to wider employee audience.