

Change Implementation and Competitive Positioning: a Study of the Nigeria Telecommunication Industry

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Abstract

Implementing complex organisational changes involve collective action by many people, each of whom contributes something to the implementation of change may face a big problem if the required environment, technique and technologies are lacking. The objectives of this study is to illustrate the significance of change implementation on competitive positioning. Descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population of this study comprised 30,724 management employees of the telecommunication industry (NCC 2012). Based on proportional stratified sampling technique, the survey sample size calculator software was used to select 2312 employees. A six point Likert scale type questionnaire used to collect data was validated by experts and a 0.81 Cronbach alpha coefficient confirmed its reliability. Of the 2312 questionnaire copies administered, 1345 were returned dully filled out. Change implementation had a significant relationship with competitive positioning ($R^2=0.251$, $p\text{-value}=0.0000 < 0.05$); hence, the result showed a positive significant relationship. The study concluded that change implementation significantly determined competitive positioning and firms' performance. The study recommended among other things that managers should make change implementation an integral part of change management so as to ensure firms' performance. A major implication of the findings for the industry is that it has provided an insight into some of the implications change implementation on firms' performance in the Nigerian telecommunication industry. Implementing change judiciously is necessary.

Keywords: *Change implementation, Competitive positioning, Change management and Firms' performance*

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Background to the Study

A lot of resources may be committed to change effort but when the change implementation stage is erroneous, the intended firms' objectives may not be achieved. Implementing complex organizational changes involves collective action by many people, each of whom contributes something to the implementation effort. Because implementation is often a 'team sport,' problems arise when some feel committed to implementation but others do not. Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) observe that organizational members can commit to implementing an organizational change because they want to (they value the change), because they have to (they have little choice), or because they ought to (they feel obliged). Commitment based on 'want to' motives reflects the highest level of commitment to implement organizational change.

Statement of the problem

Change implementation may be bedevilled by lack of support for the change. Implementation of change may face a big problem if the required environment, techniques and technologies are lacking. Effort to implement change is institution-wide or focused at the departmental level; the reason for failure can nearly always be traced to a lack of effective change management skills exhibited by the leader. More specifically, it is most often a leader's misunderstanding of organizational culture and human relations within that culture that may prevent successful implementation of change strategies. Implementing change in the Nigeria Telecommunication industry might have been affected by the unstable economic and social factors of the Nigerian business environment.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study is to illustrate the significance of change implementation on competitive positioning. The role change implementation plays has not been clearly defined and the discrepancies in the steps needed to be taken when implementing change needs to be made known clearly.

Research Question

To what extent will change implementation affect competitive positioning in the telecommunication industry in Nigeria?

Research Hypothesis of the Study

There is no significant relationship between change management and competitive positioning.

Scope of the Study

The scope of this study covered the management level employees of the Nigerian telecommunication industry with a population of 30724 employees. The sample representatives for this study are 2312 employees. The proportional stratified sampling technique was adopted for this study. This study is done in Lagos state Nigeria where the head offices of the telecommunication companies were situated.

Literature Review

Change Implementation

Whatever has been planned now needs to be implemented and focus should be shifted from planning to action. Attention also needs to be given to monitoring and control to ensure that things happen as intended. There are two basic approaches to implementing change. Sometimes change involves moving from A to B, where, before implementation, the nature of B is known and clearly defined. This kind of change is sometimes referred to as 'blueprint' change. Typical examples of a blueprint change include relocation, computerization of a business process, or the introduction of a new appraisal or grading system. In these circumstances, it is easier to view the management of change from the perspective of 'planned change' that involves a predetermined linear process (Nelson, 2003).

Often, however, it is not possible to specify the end point (B) of a change in advance of implementation. While a need for change might be recognized, for example if the organization is losing market share or is failing to innovate as fast as its competitors, it may be less obvious what needs to be done to improve matters. There may be a broadly defined goal and a direction for change, for example improving competitiveness, but it may not be possible to provide a detailed specification of what this end state will look like. In some situations, it may not even be helpful to think in terms of specific end states because the rate of change in the operating environment may be such that the precise definition of a desirable end state may be subject to constant revision. In these circumstances, a blueprint approach to change is inappropriate. Change need to be viewed as a more open-ended and interactive process that emerges or evolves over time. Buchanan (2011) argues that this is not unusual and that change often unfolds in an iterative fashion and can involve much backtracking. Collins (2001) echoes this view and argues that the change process is often more like a series of loops rather than a straight line, reflecting the reality that things rarely progress as planned, and even when plans are implemented as intended, there are often unanticipated consequences. Managers frequently report that for every step forward, they seem to fall back two steps and they constantly have to 'fix things' to keep the change on track.

An emergent or evolutionary approach to change involves taking tentative incremental steps in, what is hoped is, the right direction. After each step, the step itself and the direction of the change are reviewed to establish if the step worked and if the direction still holds good. As the process unfolds, it may be possible to define the end state a bit more precisely or to take future steps with more confidence.

Even with blueprint changes, these feedback loops are important because feedback from implementation can lead to the identification of new problems and possibilities. It may have implications for planning of further activities to bring about change and may even affect the definition of a more desirable end state, thus leading to a revision of the blueprint. Sometimes the feedback may also alert change managers to the possibility that was originally perceived as a blueprint change might be more appropriately approached and managed as an evolutionary change. But this feedback is not always available.

Competitive Positioning

Competitive position refers to the position a firm occupies in a market or is trying to occupy relative to completion. Competitive positioning is a summary of the way a company wants its target audience to perceive its products, its brands and its corporate reputation. Understanding how competitive rivals are positioned in the marketplace help refine own business strategy so that competitive threats can be counted and strengthen own position. To build an understanding of competitor's positioning, analysis of their communications, monitor analysts' view of the marketplace and research customers' attitudes towards competitors. Competitive positioning is about defining how you will 'differentiate' your offering and create value for your market. It is about carving out a spot in the competitive landscape and focusing your company to deliver on that strategy. Some of these strategies involve getting the market profile (i.e. size, competitors, stage of growth), customers segment (i.e. groups of prospects with similar wants and needs), analysis of the competition (i.e. strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the landscape), positioning strategy (i.e. how you will position your offering to focus on opportunities in the market) and value positioning (i.e. the type of value you will deliver to the market). When your market clearly sees how your offering is different than that of you competitors, it's easier to generate new prospects and guide them to buy. Without differentiation, it takes more time and money to show prospects why they should choose you. As a result, you often end up competing on price – a tough position to sustain over the long term. One of the key elements of your positioning strategy is your value proposition. There are three essential types of value, operational excellence, product leadership and customers' intimacy.

Theoretical Framework

Lewin's Three – Step Change Theory and Model

Kurt Lewin in 1945 introduced the three – step change model. This social scientist views behavior as a dynamic balance of forces working in opposing directions. Driving forces facilitate change because they push employees in the desired direction. Restraining forces hinder change because they push employees in the opposite direction. Therefore, these forces must be analyzed and Lewin's three – step model can help shift the balance in the direction of the planned change.

According to Lewin, the first step in the process of changing behavior is to unfreeze the existing situation or status quo. The status quo is considered the equilibrium state. Unfreezing is necessary to overcome the strains of individual resistance and group conformity. Unfreezing can be achieved by the use of three methods. First, increase the driving forces that direct behaviour away from the existing situation or status quo. Second, decrease the restraining forces that negatively affect the movement from the existing equilibrium. Third, find a combination of the two methods listed above. Some activities that can assist in the unfreezing step include: motivate participants by preparing them for change, build trust and recognition for the need to change, and actively participate in recognizing problems and brainstorming solutions within a group (Robbins, 2005).

Lewin's second step in the process of changing behaviour is movement. In this step, it is necessary to move the target system to a new level of equilibrium. Three actions that can assist in the movement step include: persuading employees to agree that the status quo is not

beneficial to them and encouraging them to view the problem from a fresh perspective, work together on a quest for new, relevant information, and connect the views of the group to well-respected, powerful leaders that also support the change. The third step of Lewin's three-step change model is refreezing. This step needs to take place after the change has been implemented in order for it to be sustained or "stick" over time. It is most likely that the change will be short lived and the employees will revert to their old equilibrium (behaviours) if this step is not taken. It is the actual integration of the new values into the community values and traditions. The purpose of refreezing is to stabilize the new equilibrium resulting from the change to balancing both the driving and restraining forces. One action that can be used to implement Lewin's third step is to reinforce new patterns and institutionalize them through formal and informal mechanisms including policies and procedures (Robbins, 2005).

Therefore, Lewin's model illustrates the effects of forces that either promote or inhibit change. Specifically, driving forces promote change while restraining forces oppose change. Hence, change will occur when the combined strength of one force is greater than the combined strength of the opposing set of forces (Robbins, 2005).

In Lewin's Model, there is a stipulation for three distinct steps in change management if it is to be effective. Those are unfreezing the present, moving from the present and if freezing of this model is not followed then change will be short-lived. In other words, you can cause needed change to occur. However, in order for change to be permanent, you must dismantle the present (and the capability to move back to the present), move from the present to the future and put in place the people and processes to ensure permanency (Lewin, 1951). This model is still relevant in terms of what to do. However, the speed at which it must be done has increased dramatically. Lewin's model is one for planned change, not responses to unplanned change. Yet it is applicable when unplanned change occurs.

Empirical Framework

Two of the most urgent challenges to radical change management are setting appropriate aspiration and mobilizing energy and ideas. However, change path must be outlined and defined. Planning a change effort is involved as various facets of an organization and its people need to be considering communication initially and throughout the change process is imperative. It is through the deliberate and disciplined action of management that organizations effectively implement change initiatives that cultivate success (Jager 2006). Similarly, (Jagar 2006) submits that the strategic goals of the firm must lead the change effort. The change effort must always take into account the firms competitive strategy. A change implementation process was posited to be a process that include, generate urgency; create a vision; develop political support; manage the transition; sustain momentum.

Some techniques focus on change in the task others on the plans for attaining these goals. The commonly used structural approaches to change are goal setting, job redesign, quality circles and strategic planning. All of these techniques of OD attempt to produce some kind of change in individual employees work group and or the entire organization. In line with the findings of Hans-Jurgen (2002) that is, organisational change management methods and tools during implementation can play an important role to facilitate change in process as well

as in the corporate culture. The role implementation plays has not been clearly defined and the discrepancies in the steps needed to be taken when implementing change needs to be made known.

Methodology

The study adopted cross sectional survey research design. The reason for the choice of this design was necessary because none of the variables was manipulated and no experiment was performed. The population, sample size, sampling technic follows:

Population

The population of this study consisted of all employees at the management level in the Nigerian telecommunication industry. The population is 30,724 management staff as shown in table 1 below

Table 1 Population and Sample Size Table

Firm	Population	Sample size
MTN Nigeria	11430	1860
Airtel Nigeria	15820	1190
Globacom Nigeria	2003	151
Etisalat Nigeria	1100	83
Visafone	300	23
Stacomms	71	05
Total	30724	2312

Source: Nigeria Communication Commission 2012

Sampling Method

The proportionate stratified random sampling method was used for this study. Ifenowo (2013) described this method as dividing the population into sub-groups on the factor in question, and keeps the list separate in your frame; you then choose sub-samples at random with each separate list. However, the sum of each of the sub-samples amounts to the sample size. The stratified random sampling method is a type of probabilistic sampling method. 2,312 copies of the questionnaire were personally administered on the respondents with help of 3 research assistants at the head offices of the selected telecommunication firms. After two weeks of administration, 1,402 questionnaire were returned out of which 1,435 were subjected to analysis.

Table 2 Change Implementation

The project lead for the change is known and project champions aid the planning and implementation	4.43	4	1.191	1.418	6358	1435
There are long periods of planning before the change is delivered	4.38	5	1.008	1.016	6281	1435
The implementation of the change within your role is managed solely by the organisation	4.26	4	1.040	1.082	6109	1435
There are logical reasons for change which are visible and the goals are transparent	4.22	4	1.048	1.098	6053	1435
Good ideas for change are hidden and used for personal agendas	4.13	4	1.116	1.246	5922	1435
Change is expected without being linked to incentives	4.20	4	1.041	1.084	6008	1429
Communication about change is limited to only those directly concerned with the project	4.32	4	1.149	1.321	6202	1434
There are delays in the timescales that are set in the change project	4.11	4	.979	.958	5899	1435
The process of implementation for the change is flexible and reactive	4.19	5	.873	.762	6010	1435
Once the implementation has taken place user involvement in the project begins	4.44	4	.940	.884	6371	1435
There are predetermined guidelines for how the system implementation is to be managed and these are followed	4.61	5	1.178	1.388	6621	1435
Implementation leadership is unclear and champions are not utilized effectively	4.21	4	1.102	1.214	6047	1435
The reasons for change are unclear and there are different views of the goals of the implementation	4.24	5	1.173	1.375	6078	1435
Ideas are openly communicated and encouraged within the implementation	4.30	5	.970	.940	6137	1426
The direction of the implementation is influenced by resistance	4.16	4	.972	.946	5948	1429
Incentives are linked with the implementation to aid the process of change	4.20	4	1.045	1.092	6025	1435
Implementation communications are open and readily available	4.31	4	1.029	1.059	6171	1432
Key implementation personnel are chosen, put in charge and left unchanged	4.24	4	1.073	1.150	6074	1434

Wide timescales for the implementation deliverables are set and goals and are met	4.25	4	.917	.842	6086	1432
The project is being implemented by people with the necessary core skills in a clearly defined and tracked manner	4.48	5	1.009	1.019	6427	1434
There is feeling that everyone is focused on the same goals and objectives	4.42	5	1.087	1.181	6346	1435
Employees are able to take ownership and influence details of the change	4.41	5	1.057	1.117	6324	1435
There is appreciation of how the change will take place and be effectively communicated	4.48	4	.951	.905	6431	1435
There is assistance from the project owners, project infrastructure, training specialist to create a supportive environment	4.35	5	1.035	1.071	6249	1435

The respondents were also evaluated on their readiness for change implementation in their various units. The researcher uses twenty four questions for this, based on six likert scale. However, it was observed in (Table 2) that majority of the respondents picked 'fairly agreed' to implementing change with an average for each of the question ranging from 4.11 to 4.61. It shows that since, the managers were not ready for change; they found it difficult in implementing change.

Table 3 Competitive Positioning

QUESTIONS	MEAN	MODE	STD. DEV.	VAR	SUM	N
The company has a strategy to attract and retain customers	4.59	5	1.137	1.293	6591	1435
The incumbent competitors have products or services that can compete successfully your company's products or services	4.44	5	1.027	1.054	6373	1435
The incumbent competitors have the operational capacity or capacity to compete successfully against your company's product or services	4.48	5	.986	.973	6328	1414
Your company has introduced your products and services and established a position in the marketplace undetected by your competitors	4.85	5	.983	.967	6933	1430
Specific competitors can be successful in responding to your entry in the market	4.87	5	.985	.970	6972	1431
Your product or service can address 20% of the market size	5.00	5	.944	.891	7091	1418
Our product or service is essential to our prospective customers	4.91	5	1.033	1.067	7026	1430

Our core product or service is also a core product or service for our competitors	4.95	5	.932	.869	7089	1431
Meetings with potential lead customers confirm the must have nature of our products or services	4.71	5	1.060	1.123	6743	1431
Competitors activities confirm that the market is demanding solution like our product or services as must -haves rather than nice-to-haves	4.57	4	.997	.995	6503	1422
Our product or service fills gaps in the current product or service offerings of our competitors	4.58	5	1.056	1.114	6549	1431
Many early adopters, like to purchase your product and services within the first 1 to 2 years after launch	4.45	4	1.153	1.330	6339	1425
The early adopters of your products or services are nurtured when captured	4.61	5	.979	.958	6588	1430
Competitors face barriers in responding to your innovative products or services	4.64	5	1.050	1.102	6646	1431
Competitors chose to depend their current market position aggressively in response to the entry of your product or services into market	4.64	5	1.155	1.333	6644	1431

More also, on whether their company can complete relatively well with other telecommunication companies within the country. Most of the respondents perceived their respective company can complete well with others, as majority of them “agreed” with the questions. Table (3) above shows the average responses to questions relating to competitive positioning ranging from 4.45 to 4.95. Managers are aware of their roles even at times of change in the competitive market.

Test of Hypothesis

Table 4 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.501 ^a	.251	.251	.919

TABLE 5 ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1769.831	5	353.966	419.211	.000 ^b
	Residual	5271.356	6243	.844		
	Total	7041.187	6248			

Table 6 Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.481	.092		5.253	.000
The project lead for the change is known and project champions aid the planning and implementation	.126	.011	.139	11.677	.000
Good ideas for change are hidden and used for personal agendas	-.029	.011	-.030	-2.568	.010
The process of implementation for the change is flexible and reactive	.249	.015	.198	16.516	.000
Once the implementation has taken place user involvement in the project begins	.228	.014	.200	16.453	.000
There is assistance from the project owners, project infrastructure, training specialist to create a supportive environment	.332	.013	.293	25.770	.000

The ANOVA table (table 5) shows a significant value of 0.000 with sum of squares regression 1769.831 and sum of squares residual to be 5271.356. The model is significant, which implies that the model is adequate in establishing the relationship between the dependent and independent variable. The model summary (table 4) shows that there is a weak positive relationship between the dependent and the independent variable (R=0.501). Also, the coefficient of determination is 0.251 which implies that about 23.1% variation change focused on the same goals and objectives is caused by the joint effect of the independent variables considered. The model standard error is 0.919. All the independent variables considered are significant with sig. Values less than 0.05 significance level.

The Model is:

$$Y_3 = 0.481 + 0.126X_{31} + 0.029X_{32} + 0.249X_{33} + 0.228X_{34} + 0.332X_{35}$$

We then conclude by accepting the alternative hypothesis and conclude that, there is significant relationship between change implementation and firms' performance.

Discussion

There is significant relationship between change implementation and firms' performance. The outcome of these findings confirms that change implementation is an integral path of change management that sustains firms' performance. Dicke (2007) suggest that in implementing change, it is important not to apply generic solutions to local challenges but rather a customised solution which have not been imported from other organisational context.

Downs (2012) suggest that in implementing planned change, attempt is made to produce some kind of change in individual employees, work group and or the entire organisation. In the same, vein, organisational change management methods and tools during change

implementation can play an important role to facilitate change in process as well as in the corporate culture. Doorewaard and Bens (2002) also supported the findings of this research. However, Dann (2010), suggest that in implementing change, and understanding change management process, should be in the context of organisational culture. Hughes (2011) share a similar view with the research findings that change implementation process is a tool for the development of an organisation and its effectiveness as a system. It is through the deliberate and disciplined action of management that organisations effectively implement change initiative that cultivates success (Lewis, 2000).

Many change projects have been abandoned mid-implementation after huge funds and management time has been committed. It is a pity that some of the organisations with this kind of regrettable experience have either not recovered fully from the wasted investment or have ceased to exist. For instance, efforts to automate the operations of various federal and state governments' ministries and agencies in Nigeria are far from being realised in spite of the huge amounts of money and time that have been committed to these tasks over time. Many of the projects have been abandoned and there is hardly any government ministry in Nigeria that is fully automated. Another example is the national identity card program embarked upon by the Nigerian government more than two decades ago. The change was resisted but the government went ahead with it. However, from all indications the project has been abandoned and all economic, financial and other resources committed have been wasted. The pre-implementation stage is a foundation for the implementation stage. Faulty pre-implementation programs often culminate in serious problems that truncate the process change at the implementation stage.

According to Ogilvie and Stork (2002), it is necessary for management to set up a standing committee to be proactive in identifying problems and resistance during the implementation and finding solutions immediately. When it cannot prevent problem and resistance, it should at least find effective solutions. The standing committee should be composed of all departments affected by the process change and should meet on a regular basis and when the need arises to discuss problems and solutions.

Min- Chew, Cheng and Lazarevic (2006) submit in their research that to identify the key steps that could improve the management of change, literature relating to organisational culture, the need for change, types of change and resistance to change was used. The research has demonstrated how well-planned change helps to ensure that change is successfully implemented. Critical to successful change is the alignment of organisational culture to support these new processes. Lewin identified three steps to change: unfreezing, moving and refreezing (Lewis 2000). Minimising barriers to change and maximising the opportunities of a change effort are accentuated in the unfreezing process. In the moving stage, recognition of need for change and the acceptance of change have to take place in the workforce. Accordingly, managers as change agents are expected to restore or reinforce the new system actively with all employees in the freezing step. This simple three-step model explains the importance of implementing successful change by unfreezing the existing situation followed by change movement and making the new behaviours and norms absolute. Throughout the course of action, managers need to ensure that all communication channels contribute to information sharing and accurate absorption of relevant information

by all employees. According to Abrahamson (2000), dynamic stability involves tinkering and kludging. It means carrying out change by involving elements within an organisation and engaging more employees gradually. Employees are to be constantly aware of proposed changes because they are the ones who make it happen. Managers, on the other hand, should collect feedback continuously by interacting with employees as well. By applying such concept of dynamic stability, an organisation might look forward to a successful outcome in change implementation.

According to Chew, Cheng and Petrovic, (2006), change efforts mainly focused on business and cost driven initiatives. This observation suggests that organisational leaders should give careful attention to how each activity can be designed and well integrated when planning and implementing organisational change.

Summary of Findings

There is no significant relationship between change implementation and competitive positioning. This objective was tested using primary data extracted from the questionnaire administered. The hypothesis was tested and it was observed that the significant value was 0.000 from the F-test and the independent variable were significant which implies that the independent variable contribute to the dependent variable (there is a feeling that everyone is focused on the same goals and objectives). The model derived is significant therefore we then concluded by accepting the alternative hypothesis which states that there is a significant relationship between change implementation and competitive positioning. The objective, to illustrate the Significance of Change Implementation on competitive positioning was attained.

Conclusion

Change implementation contributes significantly to firms' performance. It can be asserted that the process of implementation for the change is flexible and that there is a predetermined guideline for how the implementation is to be managed. They are listed as incentives that are linked with implementation to aid the process of change. Change is being implemented by people with the necessary core skills and everyone is focused on the same goals and objectives. This study concludes that change implementation significantly determined competitive positioning and firms' performance. Organisations that are finding it more difficult to cope with the myriads of changes necessitated by environmental adjustments should adhere to the change implementation process so as to maximise firms' performance.

Recommendations

A major implication of the findings for the industry is that it has provided an insight into some of the implications change implementation on firms' performance in the Nigerian telecommunication industry. Implementing change judiciously is necessary.

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