



# An Investigation into Managing Employee Resistance to Change at a South African Mining Company

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## ABSTRACT

Organisations within the global mining industry strive to remain competitive and therefore change process should be a regular daily activity. The key driving force behind the change management process was identified in this research as the desire to curtail operating costs by using a technology-driven approach in the Security Department of a particular South African mining company. The purpose of the research is to investigate both the impact of the change process on employees as well as to determine sources of resistance with a proposed outcome to ensure that change processes and strong change management structures are in place that will model change champions without significant resistance.

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## Introduction

The client, a global mining company, is exposed to a very dynamic business environment and to massive challenges in its business processes and business strategy alignment systems. In responding to these prevailing challenges, the client requested all business departments to investigate the value chain processes with the aim of assessing cost saving initiatives and improving operational efficiencies. A typical example concerns the security department following a feasibility study on technology. As a result, the department planned to implement a new technology aimed at improving the protection of company employees and assets and that would also, in all likelihood, reduce operating costs.

Preliminary consultation indicated that employees in the various departments were threatened by the proposed business strategy alignment system changes; they were against the implementation of changes aimed at streamlining work processes. It is thus important that a scientific investigation be conducted in order to establish the impact of planned change on employees and the factors which lead to employee resistance to change at the company.

## Background to the Study

The client is a multi-national company listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange with mining operations located in South Africa and Zimbabwe. The mining operations, including managed joint-ventures in South Africa, are based in three provinces: North-West, Limpopo and Mpumalanga, with a total work force of 49 816. The Head Office is based in Johannesburg. This study focussed on the South African operations, excluding Zimbabwe.

Like any other organisation operating in a competitive environment, the company aspires to achieve people excellence, cost effectiveness and technology and innovation as some of the organisational value-driven strategy imperatives. According to the company's internal documentation, in striving to achieve this strategy, all business departments at the company have been requested to

investigate the value chain processes with the aim of assessing cost saving initiatives and improving operational efficiencies.

As a cost reduction exercise, the security department has initiated a feasibility study on a new technology for enhanced safeguarding of company employees and assets. The integrated security technology seeks to streamline work processes and automate mundane security tasks throughout the company's South African mining operations. However, the preliminary diagnosis shows that employees working in various departments are opposed to the introduction of business strategy alignment technologies due to fear of potential job losses, change of work methods and possible retrenchments. It is, therefore, crucial that an investigation be carried out to assess the impact of planned change on employees and to identify factors leading to resistance to change by their employees.

## Research Problem

Preliminary consultation indicates that employees in the various departments are threatened by the proposed business strategy alignment system changes and are therefore against the implementation of the changes aimed at streamlining work processes. Employees are afraid of technology that could potentially lead to job losses, change of work methods and forced retrenchments. It is thus important that a scientific investigation be conducted in order to establish the impact of planned change on employees and factors leading to employee resistance to change at the company.

## Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to investigate the level of employee resistance to change at the company, as well as devising methods of managing resistance to change.

## Research Objectives

To investigate the impact of planned change on employees;

To investigate factors leading to employee resistance to change; and To make recommendations for managing employee resistance to change.

### Research Questions

What will be the impact of planned change on employees?

What are the factors leading to employee resistance to change?

What recommendations can be made to manage employee resistance to change?

### Significance of the Study

The research results will help the company in refining and implementing its communication strategies at various levels of employee representation, such as at union level, departmental level and individual level, in order to mitigate the degree of resistance to change.

Brown (2014:15) has pointed out that “change is the only thing that is constant”. Grobler, Bothma, Brewster, Carey, Holland and Warnich (2014:329); and Brown (2014:15) further warn that for an organisation to survive in a dynamic business environment, a process to constantly revamp systems, people and technology is essential. The success and sustainability of organisations depends on how they respond to the change drivers.

World-wide changes have introduced new products and technologies that have changed the modern way of life. Opportunities favour those organisations that are prepared for change. The needs, preferences and tastes of customers are modified by factors such as income, education and status and are constantly changing.

Finally, the research recommendations will be beneficial in reviewing policies and procedures relating to change management at the company, contributing to cost reduction and improving operational efficiencies.

### Literature Review

#### Introduction

Change drivers, critical factors that cause resistance and manifest in employees during change management processes, are analysed so that the current knowledge on change management could be mapped. At the same time, the critical areas with information gaps are highlighted.

#### Definition of Change Management

The field of change management is evolving and is widely researched, as demonstrated by many different definitions. For example, change management is defined as critical business competence that affects all disciplines within an organisation (Cabrey, Haughey & Cooke-Davies, 2014:2). Change management is also described as the process of moving people, groups and institutions from the status quo to a more favourable condition (Zafar, Hassan, Nawaz, Rohra & Mubin, 2014:65).

As stated above, change management is viewed as a transversal function affecting other professions, such as project management, as opposed to being the responsibility of a single department. This therefore implies that collaboration and teamwork in any change programme is undoubtedly a prerequisite. The practice of change management has received notable recognition and is also accepted as an extension of modern risk management (Thorvaldsen, 2012:2).

Experts explain change management as a methodological tool used to handle a change which affects both the organisation and its employees (Rouse, 2015). Whilst the experts highlight the tool in implementing change, Brown (2014:119) emphasises the primary goal of change management as a way to comprehend the direction and strategy in attaining the proposed change.

From the above divergent definitions of change management, all writers incorporated an element of a

structured approach in enabling an organisation to achieve its strategy. Furthermore, emphasis is placed on the usage of scientific instruments in changing organisations, and, more importantly, focussing on the personnel aspect. These definitions fit well into this research topic, which analysed the change management processes of the employees and of the work processes at the company. The meaning of organisational change is examined as follows.

#### Definition of Organisational Change

Organisational change is defined as a process of modifying key elements in the organisation, namely, technology, people and structure (Robbins & Coulter, 2012:183). Organisational change is comprehensively defined as the means whereby a business alters its working methods, culture, structure, strategy or technology (Smit, Cronje, Brevis & Vrba, 2013:253; and Grimsley, 2015:1).

Whilst the above authors underline key elements in describing organisational change, Kadian-Baumeyer (2015:1) defines organisational change differently, as a total readjustment of the organisation with the goal of altering the status quo. Although there are dissimilar definitions which depict various ideological descriptions in explaining organisational change, the majority of authors concur that organisational change is a process not a once-off activity. In this study, technology and people were key elements of focus for the organisational change. The focus is now on the types of organisational change as analysed in the next section.

#### Types of Organisational Change

Smit *et al.*, 2013:253 identified the types of organisational change as being incremental, discontinuous, planned, evolutionary and revolutionary.

Jacobs, van Witteloostuijn and Christe-Zeyse (2013:772) point out that when organisational change is initiated, it causes uncertainty. In this study, planned change was adopted. When organisational change is being contemplated for implementation, two methods which guide the change approach are suggested by Nel, Werner, Poisat, Sono, Du Plessis, Ngalo, Van Hoek and Botha (2011:448):

1. Smooth method, involving employee conduct, culture and perception. In the case of this company, the perception and behaviour of employees as respondents or change recipients was assessed using the research instrument.
2. Harsh method, comprising technology, systems, structure and strategy. In the case of this company, technology served as a key change driver to automate work processes in the security department.

As outlined above, a combination of the aforementioned methods may be used in the change process but the choice is influenced by the type of change. The key change drivers are analysed in the following section.

#### Change Drivers

Organisations are continuously threatened with internal and external forces in the business environment. There is empirical evidence supporting the fact that organisational change is prompted by a vibrant business environment (Brown, 2014:15). For organisations to remain competitive and profitable, it is of critical importance for such organisations to recognise the complexities of the business environment at a strategic level so that drivers of change are identified, analysed and prioritised. Strydom (2013:23-24) lists the following key change drivers in the business environment.

### Market Environment

Organisations are elements of the market environment and are also part of the external environment (Strydom, 2013:23-24). He further explains that the components of the market environment include the market, competition, intermediaries and the suppliers of resources and services. These components are further analysed below:

#### The market

Mike Teke, President of the Chamber of Mines of South Africa, described a typical example of a market driver as the decrease in commodity prices, which is affecting the sustainability of the mining industry (Teke, 2015:1).

#### Competition: local and international competition

It is important to evaluate marketing opportunities so that the market demand is established (Kotler & Keller, 2012:108). This helps to guide the development of a game plan that will result in competing successfully and growing the business (Thompson, Peteraf, Gamble and Strickland (2012:52). The nature of and competitive forces within a specific industry locally can drive the industry or they can cause stagnation in the industry, resulting in a change in the organisation.

At the international level, businesses market their services or products abroad (Heizer & Render, 2014:83). Tough global competition requires organisations to continuously review their international strategies in order to be profitable. In this study, the organisation is competing locally and abroad with primary producers of platinum group metals and other businesses engaged in recycling metals. The organisation is thus required to review its marketing strategy in order to remain as market leader.

#### Suppliers of resources and services

The mining industry is greatly dependent on input resources such as explosives, fuel, chemicals, water supply and support services in order to process and produce a final product. The performance and service quality of a service provider is influenced by the supply chain criteria used by companies in selecting a suitable supplier (Nieman & Bennet, 2014:120).

Strydom (2013:23-24) notes that a critical analysis of the market environment will expose the opportunities and threats within a specific industry. He further explains that business managers have control of this environment to a certain extent through the use of strategies. Analysis of the environment will guide organisations in adjusting their strategies and as a result, will influence the change management process.

#### Macro Environment

The macro environment is the most remote business environment over which business managers have no control at all; the associated features are scrutinised below (Strydom, 2013:23-24).

#### Social environment

Organisations in the mining industry are often confronted with the challenge of managing social unrest and responding to high unemployment in the geographical areas where they operate. It is often stated in the public domain that the problems of the destitute, income disparity and joblessness faced in South Africa cannot be resolved by government alone.

#### Economic conditions

The South African economy grew by 0.6% of gross domestic product in the first two quarters of 2014 (Statistics South Africa, 2014:2). Furthermore, the decline of demand for platinum group metals and a low commodity spot price is negatively affecting export sales. The two factors in turn

negatively affect economic parties within the organisation and trigger change in organisations.

#### Technological environment

Technology is defined as a form of expertise dedicated to developing equipment or systems, transforming activities and retrieving information (Ramey, 2013:1). However, Payne (2011:1) describes technology differently, as a means for people to create machines that uplift the standard of living. Grobler *et al.* (2014:329) emphasise that technology has changed the way in which the organisation operates and created abundant opportunities for modernising work processes.

The above diverse definitions show that technology involves skilled people and specialised equipment in order to process data and produce the end goal. There is consensus from the writers researched about the importance and value-add of technology to organisations. Whilst there are various types of technologies, the focus of the study is on information technology (IT). IT is described as a range of gadgets and software equipment utilised to hoard data or evidence (Ramey, 2013:6).

Bryant (2015:1-2) advise that technology offers abundant opportunities for organisations to initiate change programmes to automate work processes. It is also important that a cost benefit analysis is conducted to understand both the advantages and disadvantages of technology in the proper context. In managing the negative impact of some of the disadvantages of technology, organisations are advised to implement a risk management strategy on the proposed technology against the risk of data losses, damage and cyber-crimes.

#### Management and leadership

The importance of management in the change process cannot be underestimated. Management is described as a factor of production responsible for ensuring that labour and capital are used effectively to increase productivity (Heizer & Render, 2014:52). The main function of a manager is to plan, organise, lead and control the activities of the organisation (Smit *et al.*, 2014:66). They further emphasised that the manager is responsible for understanding the impact of change and the change process in order to achieve the objectives of the organisation. Mandala (2011:7-8) emphatically concur that all organisations need management and managerial skills to achieve business goals.

However, Grobler *et al.* (2012:329) found that management and leadership were two of three main areas which contributed to obstacles to change. Whilst the writers discussed previously explained the relevance of management in the change process, they also warned that poor management could cause an obstacle to change and possibly increase employee resistance.

#### New strategy

A strategy is a method applied to achieve a goal (Brown, 2014:377; and Smit *et al.*, 2014:253). Before any organisation can draw up a new strategy, it must conduct an analysis. A critical business analysis such as a SWOT analysis will expose the opportunities and threats within a specific industry (Thompson *et al.*, 2012:150-151). In the case of this company, the business review has informed a new strategy that focussed on a value-driven approach.

#### Labour relations (employees and unions)

Heizer and Render (2014:52) explain labour as one of the key factors of production employed to increase productivity in any organisation. Organisations are generally dependent on

using labour in the achievement of set goals. Labour can stage industrial action to enforce a change.

### Change Strategies

It is prudent for organisations to have a clear plan to manage the change process when contemplating a change initiative. Williams (2014:1) finds that the majority of change management projects fail due to incompatible change strategies.

The choice of any change strategy depends on the type of change and change drivers influencing the organisational change. However, management plays a decisive role in mitigating the resistance to change through a proper communication plan outlining the benefits of the proposed change to solicit employee support. For example, empirical-rational and normative-re-educative change strategies are relevant in scenarios where the proposed change and benefits were clearly articulated at the beginning of employee consultation so that the forces driving change are understood and supported in mitigating the level of resistance.

However, in scenarios where the organisation is under severe pressure from the regulatory body in government and is urgently required to implement change without delays, power-coercive may be a relevant change strategy. As cautioned by Brown (2014:19), many change management programmes are unsuccessful due to failure to effectively manage the effects of change among employees. Anticipating the positive or negative impact of change on workers should be considered when a change strategy is contemplated.

### Factors in Selecting Change Strategies

Nickols (2010:6) suggests the following factors should be taken into account when choosing a change strategy.

**Magnitude of Change:** The criterion to choose a change strategy is influenced by the scope and type of change (Nickols, 2010:6). **Magnitude of Resistance:** The level of resistance by change recipients will guide the type of change strategy to be used (Nickols, 2010:6). If the change process was clearly explained to employees using empirical-rational change strategy, the likelihood of resistance will be minimal, increasing the chances of support for the change.

**Target Population:** Integrated change strategies may be used for different target populations (Nickols, 2010:6). It is important to anticipate diverse employee reaction whether positive or negative from affected employees so that a situational-fit change strategy is selected to minimise opposition.

**High Stake Conditions:** In high stake conditions, a combination of change strategies may be used to manage the situation and to mitigate the consequences (Nickols, 2010:6). A decisive choice based on scenario planning is encouraged.

**Time Frame:** A power-coercive change strategy is normally recommended for short time frames, whilst the other three change strategies are relevant for longer periods (Nickols, 2010:6).

**Know-how:** Power-coercive change strategy is relevant in situations where no expert is available; a combination of strategies could be used where an expert is available (Nickols, 2010:6).

**Dependency:** The role of employees in the business value chain and the value of the organisation to employees can become a contentious issue requiring proper understanding and appreciation (Nickols, 2010:6). Negotiation and compromises are mechanisms available for use by change strategists in creating a positive climate for the change process.

### Categories of Planned Change

According to Nel et al. (2011:448) and Smit et al. (2013:250), planned change is explained as “a change process that is planned and executed in anticipation of future events and changes” whilst unplanned change is “a change process that is triggered by an emergency”. This research study focuses on planned change relating to employee resistance to change at the company. This is caused by a proposed technological change aimed at streamlining work processes in the security department.

### Incremental Change

This type of planned change is viewed as a minimal scope of change comprising small advancements in work processes at specific departments in the organisation (Nel et al., 2011:448). It is a change taking place in the organisation logically and calmly at steady rate and in an anticipated manner.

### Strategic Change

This category of planned change is described as a big scope of change with partial business streamlining (Nel et al., 2011:448). Strategic change is generally implemented at corporate level affecting the majority of cross-departmental functions.

### Transformational Change

This type of planned change is viewed as a very significant change resulting in major changes in the firm (Fredberg, Norrgen & Shani, 2011:120). This type of planned change involves alteration of structure, systems, job roles and culture in the organisation.

### Change Models for Planned Change

Various change models were considered in this research study. For instance:

**The 3-Stage Model of Change (Lewin):** The famous Lewin's change model was introduced in 1951 and has since been used successfully by many organisations through the application of a three-phase approach as suggested by Smit et al. (2013:253)

This model was assessed and found to have a main shortcoming in that it does not emphasise factors leading the change and communication throughout the three-phase change process (Lim & Yazdanifard, 2014:28).

**The Kotter 8 Phase Change Model for Leading Change:** The Kotter 8 phase change model for leading change is strongly suggested by Quinn, Amer, Lonie, Blackmore, Thompson and Pettigrove (2012:21-23) and Nel et al. (2011:457-458).

### Step 1: Establish awareness of urgency

This step is comparable to phase one of Lewin's three-step change model, where the need for change is influenced by change drivers. It is the responsibility of the change strategist to provide leadership and awareness to all stakeholders, including change recipients, on challenges faced by the organisation (Quinn et al., 2012:21-23; and Nel et al., 2011:457-458). In change management, multi-dimensional communication is a prerequisite to encourage upward and downward communication between management and employees (Muller-Camen, Croucher & Leigh, 2011:361). Therefore, communication of planned change is critical from the onset to minimise employee resistance.

### Step 2: Build a guiding coalition

According to Quinn et al. (2012:21-23) and Nel et al. (2011:457-458), a team to lead and support the change process is appointed. They further state that the role of the change strategist is to appoint a change implementer and a change

management committee and to provide necessary resources to support the change programme.

### **Step 3: Form a strategic vision and initiatives for change**

The organisation is required to form a strategic vision and to direct the change initiatives (Quinn *et al.*, 2012:21-23; and Nel *et al.*, 2011:457-458). This function is also performed by the change strategist as a means of directing and outlining terms of reference to the change implementer and the change forum.

### **Step 4: Communicate the change vision**

In this step, the change strategist, as the leader of the organisation, communicates the vision (Quinn *et al.*, 2012:21-23; and Nel *et al.*, 2011:457-458). However, the change implementer's role is also becoming visible through continuous communication of the vision, using various types of communication platforms in order to influence the change recipients in understanding and supporting the change.

### **Step 5: Remove obstacles**

Change implementers do not work alone and they frequently consult the change strategist to dispose of any hindrance to empower the change process (Quinn *et al.*, 2012:21-23; and Nel *et al.*, 2011:457-458). Any business process or procedure not supporting change is removed. This step is critical for the change implementer, as they could be viewed by change recipients as either a stumbling block or an enabler of the change process.

### **Step 6: Establish short-term wins**

This step involves the process of arranging, making and celebrating milestones (Quinn *et al.*, 2012:21-23; and Nel *et al.*, 2011:457-458). Once again, the change strategist plays a leading role to encourage types of change recipients, especially resistors, as explained previously, in realising the benefits of change in progress and to support the change.

### **Step 7: Amalgamate achievements and produce more changes**

This step involves consolidation of changes already implemented successfully. Further, it concentrates on re-aligning certain work processes, job roles or structures and rolling out enabling systems or policies to achieve the vision (Quinn *et al.*, 2012:21-23; and Nel *et al.*, 2011:457-458). Quinn and Nel also state that this step focuses on maintaining the momentum of change through teamwork led by the change implementer in consultation with the change strategist.

### **Step 8: Expedite new tactics in the culture**

The last step focuses on developing or improving a performance management system to instil the new culture and enhance productivity (Quinn *et al.*, 2012:21-23; and Nel *et al.*, 2011:457-458). In instilling a new culture, organisations are advised to consider caring programmes to support employees in the change (Robbins & Coulter, 2012:191). This stage involves integration of employee development programmes on leadership and quality management to enable the organisation to realise its competitive edge in the respective markets (Quinn *et al.*, 2012:21-23; and Nel *et al.*, 2011:457-458).

It is clear that this model provides a detailed approach in leading change and emphasises communication in the change process (Lim & Yazdanifard, 2014:28). The roles carried out by various key players during the change process in the organisation are analysed in the following section.

## **Roles Played by Organisational Members in the Change Management Process**

### **Change Strategist/Top Management**

Since change is initiated by top management, it therefore becomes the role of the top management to comprehend the

impact of change and the change process in achieving the objectives of the organisation (Smit *et al.*, 2014:250). Top management is responsible for funding change initiatives and providing leadership and continuous support to the change process (Nel *et al.*, 2011:453). They further stated that it is the function of the change strategist to assure employees on job security, to introduce change implementers, to establish a change forum and to inform employee representative bodies on the proposed change. In so doing, the change strategist is setting the tone and creating an enabling environment for the change implementers.

### **The Change Implementer**

The change implementer or agent is a person appointed either internally or externally who is charged with the change management task of ensuring that the change process is managed effectively (Robbins & Coulter, 2012:183). They further expound that an external change implementer is often viewed as independent and objective; however, the scope and type of change should be key determinants in deciding whether to use an internal or an external change implementer. Nel *et al.* (2011:300) and Brown (2014:118) warn that change implementers must have the right competencies and be prepared for opposition from employees in the change process. They further stated that change implementers must have abilities in managing the whole change process and good skills in negotiation, facilitation and communication to ensure successful implementation of the change programme.

### **The Change Recipient**

Change recipients are employees of the organisation and their main role is either to support or oppose the proposed change (Oreg, Vakola & Armenakis, 2011:493-494). They further state that the role of the change recipient is to attend consultative meetings or workshops and to ask questions for clarity on the proposed change to establish personal benefits or impact.

### **Reaction Stages of Change Recipient**

The aim of this study is to investigate managing employee resistance to change at this company. Sonenshein (2010:496-498) claims that opposition, advocacy and admission are common reaction behaviours displayed by change recipients when change is announced. It is therefore important that employee reaction of change recipients is understood in order to guide the change process.

Gold (2015:1-2) suggests that a person's conduct goes through thinking and emotional processes. He refers to six stages which are preliminary contemplation, resolution, action, maintenance and regression. In stage one, the change recipient, when initially consulted about change, will feel a loss or fear resulting in a mode of denial. In stage two, once the change recipient is informed about the change drivers, they become cynical. However, the employee reaction is not linear, which means it does not always follow all stages chronologically. In stage six, the employee understands the impact of the change process and is satisfied, indicating acceptance of the change. Whether or not employees are given options in the change process depends on their level of understanding and the information available on the impact of the proposed change.

In supporting Sonenshein (2010:496-498) and Gold (2015:1-2) on stages of behavioural change, Allan (2015:2) distinguished four types of change recipients:

Supporters: They are proponents of the proposed change.

Compliant: They are obedient and adjust to change.

Resisters: They oppose change and could disrupt work with a strike.

Covert: They don't want their intentions known.

Oreg *et al.* (2011:493-494), Stensaker and Meyer (2012:108) have robustly justified assertions made by Gold (2015:1-2) and Allan (2015:2) that the reaction of change recipients can either be negative or positive behaviour to a change.

### **Factors Leading to Employee Resistance to Change**

#### **Theoretical Background for Employee Resistance to Change**

Bolognese's research in 2002, as mentioned in Rozycki (2015:1-2) defined employee resistance as reluctance or opposition by a worker. Erwin and Garman (2010:51) describe resistance to change as "a person having a pessimistic perception, attitude and conduct regarding a change programme". However, Schoemer (2010:40) argues that employee resistance to change is normal. If employee resistance is viewed as natural, then organisations are faced with the challenge of establishing which underlying factors cause resistance so that appropriate mitigation measures can be applied to minimise the level of resistance.

As stated above, employee resistance is described with negative connotations in relation to a change process. It is critical to establish what triggers resistance so that organisations can implement interventions to mitigate the level of resistance. On the other hand, employees are normally suspicious of change, which can result in opposition (Mullins, 2010:756).

Notably, other researchers found that many organisations have failed to implement change initiatives successfully due to employee resistance to change (Palmer, 2015:1). It was further reported that employee resistance was caused by a lack of understanding of the compelling reasons for change (Prosci, 2015:4).

#### **Motives for Resisting Change**

During the planning stages of change, organisations should anticipate issues that could cause fear in employees, in conjunction with the six stages of behavioural change analysed previously. There are many motives for resistance to change. Stark (2010:1-2); Quast (2012:2); Smit *et al.* (2013:255) cite as the main reasons "fear of failure, inertia, loss of job, uncertainty, lack of trust and misunderstanding".

It was further revealed that among other motives, fear was the main cause of resistance (Pihlak & Alas, 2012:235). Management and leadership styles often cause resistance to change (Anderson & Anderson, 2015:3-4). As stated above, it is important for the organisation to prepare a plan with possible scenarios in handling and responding to each factor of resistance. Robbins and Coulter (2012:191) have cautioned that a high rate of employee complaints is a sign that employees are under stress during the change management.

#### **Common Obstacles to Change**

There are a number of common obstacles to change. Mullins (2010:760), Robbins and Coulter (2012:191) and Grobler *et al.* (2012:331) cite the following points:

- Normal fear and negative perception about a change;
- Change recipients are not consulted in the change process;
- The change process is not understood by some employees;
- Poor company policies or procedures to support change;
- Poor communication on the change process;
- Absence of incentive for change;
- Low work attendance after change is announced; and
- Employees are threatened and afraid of changes.

It is clear from this that if an organisation ignores these common obstacles to change, this may jeopardise the smooth implementation of the change management process.

### **Managing Employee Resistance to Change**

#### **Role of the Line Manager in the Organisation**

The success of any organisation is dependent on the capability and quality of management to remain sustainable (Barthwal, 2010:405). Line managers play a pivotal role in the change process as the majority of change recipients may have good rapport with them. This relationship could thus be used to positively influence the perception of change recipients in support of the proposed change (Stensaker & Meyer, 2012:108).

#### **Mitigating Employee Resistance to Change**

Since the factors leading to employee resistance to change and the role of line managers in managing employee resistance to change have been scrutinised, strategies supported by the empirical evidence should now be defined. There are many strategies to mitigate employee resistance to change but Pasmore (2011:277); Nel *et al.* (2011:432); Smit *et al.* (2013:256-257) and Brown (2014:127) have emphasised the following:

#### **Education and Communication**

In this strategy, creating awareness and on-going training support with employees in the change process will reduce the level of resistance (Lipman, 2013:2; and Huang, 2015:12). It is clear that communication is critical in the change process and Schoemer (2010:75) strongly suggests an integrated communication approach during the change process:

The first approach is informative communication – this approach to communication entails advising employees about comprehensive details of the change process.

The second approach is supportive communication – this approach focuses on anticipated employee behaviour or reaction to support the change process and challenges the emotional intelligence of individuals.

The third approach is inspirational communication – this approach requires good leadership and refers to targeting and persuading teamwork and reinforces individuals in understanding the rationale of change. This integrated communications approach indisputably guides the change process.

#### **Independent facilitation**

In this strategy, an internal change facilitator could be viewed as subjective whereas an external change facilitator could be regarded as objective (Robbins & Coulter, 2012:183).

#### **Negotiation and rewards**

This strategy concentrates on obtaining a buy-in from change resisters through proper negotiation (Robbins & Coulter, 2012:187). Furthermore, it was found that the provision of incentives to employees in the change process serves as a motivation (Pattanayak, 2010:189). As explained in the previous section under Kotter's theory, celebration of milestones and the provision of incentives to proponents will increase support towards the change process.

#### **Conclusion**

Change management and organisational change were defined and analysed. It was further found that change is normal and unavoidable in organisations. Drivers of change were discussed, the reasons for resisting change, models of change and the manager's role in a change management.

#### **Research Design and Methodology**

A quantitative approach was used in this study because of the advantages that the method brought to answering the

research questions and objectives. The key advantages that were gained included the ability to afford to have the research findings statistically analysed as well as the chance of soliciting information from a large sample frame, thus increasing objectivity of research results.

The use of the quantitative approach has the following advantages:

It focuses on examining a theory;

It emphatically promotes objectivity in the research process; and

The findings of the study may be generalised (Bless, C., Higson-Smith, C. & Sithole, S.L. 2013:16).

The key disadvantage of using the quantitative research method is that an extensive population with a specific threshold is compulsory and failure to achieve the established number could result in the research project being declared incomplete (Bless *et al.*, 2013:16).

### Research Design

Research design is described as the comprehensive approach in responding to research questions (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012:159). A descriptive research method was used in this study. Saunders *et al.* (2012:669) explain the main aim of descriptive research as “to create an exact representation of people, occasions or locations”. Consequently, the method satisfies the research objectives as it helped in establishing trends and explaining relationships and co-relationships.

The descriptive method has the following advantages:

It provides an exact representation and summary of people attributes, occasions or locations;

Compared to exploratory research, it is viewed as a precursor; and

It can be used to gather structured data using a survey (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:171).

### Research Strategy

Unlike structured interviews and observations, a closed questionnaire serves as a convenient and affordable way to gather structured feedback from a sizeable sample before the analysis of data is initiated (Dawson, 2010:90).

The main advantages of using a questionnaire are that:

Collected data can be analysed with inferential and descriptive statistics;

Findings of the research study can be generalised; and

Well-designed closed questionnaires can provide an optimum level of reliability and validity (Mouton, 2013:153).

QuestionPro, an online software survey, was used in this study to gather quantitative data and to respond to the research questions. The online questionnaire as described by Saunders *et al.* (2012:421) has the following advantages:

It provides automated responses, thus simplifying the extraction of data for analysis;

It reaches more target participants in various geographical areas;

It is reliable, by ensuring that the right person is answering the questionnaire; and

It has a low rate of misrepresentation when answered online.

On the other hand, it was found that an online questionnaire has the following disadvantages:

It is costly due to the compulsory fee for online software subscription;

All respondents must be computer literate with access to email; and

The response rate ranges between 30-50% (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:421).

In this study, a questionnaire with closed-ended questions was used to solicit data from the research participants.

### Structure of the questionnaire

All research questions were derived from the research problem with the aim of addressing the research title “An investigation into managing employee resistance to change at a South African Mining Company”. This is supported by the literature review. The closed questionnaire was divided into four sections and constructed in the following manner:

Section A: Demographic: This section has six single choice questions covering the gender, age group, qualification, race, position and years of service of each respondent in the organisation.

Section B: Impact of planned change on employees: This section has eleven multiple choice questions focussing on change management, such as the purpose and type of change, communication and benefits of change, change support mechanisms, employee given options, the change process, change strategies and employee reaction to the proposed change.

Section C: Factors leading to employee resistance to change: This section had ten multiple choice questions which covered common obstacles to change and early warnings of employee resistance to change such as fear, poor work attendance, employee complaints, employee consultation and involvement in the change process.

Section D: Managing employee resistance to change: This section had ten rating questions which focussed on the role played by line management and the change implementer in change management, strategies to mitigate employee resistance to change such as communication, independent change agent, negotiation, rewards and the vision of change.

The research questions used a scale of measurement called the Likert scale. It was found that the Likert scale is generally suitable for descriptive statistics and capable of measuring alternative responses to behavioural questions, thus simplifying the analysis of data (Boone & Boone, 2012). In this research study, a 5-point Likert scale to rate the answers was used with the following legends:

<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
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After the construction of the questionnaire, it was distributed electronically.

### Target Population

According to Vonk (2014:1), population is described as the cases or group members the research study is concentrating on. The target population in this research study consisted of 1172 employees from the security department at the company. The following section analyses the type of sampling technique used in this study.

### Sampling Strategy

Probability sampling and non-probability sampling are the sampling techniques that can be used in carrying out research (Dawson, 2010:49). The distinction between the two sampling methods is assessed in detail below.

Bless *et al.* (2013:166) explain probability sampling as “an arrangement in which the probability of including each element of the population can be determined”. They further distinguish non-probability sampling “as an arrangement in which the probability of including each element of the population in a sample is unknown”. According to Flick (2014:168), non-probability sampling is generally used in qualitative research, and therefore not compatible with adopted research design in answering the research questions



and objectives. In this study, a probability sampling method was used.

Random sampling is part of probability sampling and is normally used where quantitative research strategies have been adopted in reaching a logical conclusion from the sample regarding a population (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:262). They further stated that its key advantages were that the researcher's influence in selecting research subjects is avoided and all research elements have equal chances of being selected.

The simple random method has the following advantages when used:

There is an equivalent and unplanned opportunity for every constituency to be chosen as fragment of the sample. The process of sample selection is objective (Vonk, 2014:2). In this study, considering the above advantages, a simple random method was adopted. According to Saunders *et al.* (2012:273), the process of choosing a sample in an unplanned manner from a sampling structure, utilising either a chance table or computer, is called a simple random sample. In this study, a sample frame of 115 employees was drawn from a research population of 1172 using a simple random sampling technique. The simple random sampling method was tested successfully through a pilot study as described below.

#### **Pilot Study**

The aim of a pilot study is to improve or confirm the questionnaire in preparation for the main research (Arain, Campell, Cooper & Lancaster, 2010:1). In the case of the company, the pilot study was conducted through QuestionPro, a self-administered online survey. The process followed is outlined below.

Email addresses of the target population with access to a computer were obtained from the the company's Microsoft Outlook 2010 address book and these were distributed together with a letter of permission to conduct the study. Ten respondents were provided with a web-page link to access and complete the online QuestionPro survey within a stipulated deadline.

Ethical principles were consistently applied in the study. Informed consent and a confidentiality agreement from all respondents were compulsory and obtained through the automatic validation feature activated in the QuestionPro software. The automatic validation was embedded on the introductory page as a covering letter. Before a respondent could start the online survey, they were required to agree to take part by clicking the tick box indicated as "I accept terms of research" on the introductory page. The online survey was designed and validated and to ensure that informed consent is always obtained, the respondent had to click the consent tick box in order to continue with the online survey. The data generated by the online survey enabled and simplified the process of exporting raw data from the QuestionPro software in Microsoft Excel 2010 for data analysis. The results of the pilot study were as follows:

#### **Findings from the pilot study**

An overall response rate of 80% was achieved within seven (7) days. The ability of respondents to successfully complete the online survey without any difficulties or delays proved that the sampled participants understood the content of the survey.

The pilot study was reliable at 0.887 using Cronbach's Alpha, which is far beyond 0.70. For example, Section B:  $\alpha > 0.887$ ,  $N=10$ ; Section C:  $\alpha > 0.958$ ,  $N= 10$ ; and Section D:  $\alpha > 0.952$ ,  $N= 10$ . The reliability of the pilot study was good and

only minor semantic changes in wording were made in some of the questions.

#### **Conclusion from the pilot study**

The pilot study did not reveal the need for or require significant changes in the questionnaire except for few changes in the wording of questions. The overall outcome of the pilot study confirmed the validity and reliability of the research instrument.

#### **Validity and Reliability**

Validity is explained as the degree to which the research instrument has achieved what it has initially been designed for in relation to the research study. Reliability measures the degree of consistency of the research tool, that is, whether it will yield similar outcomes if used frequently on identical occasions (Heale & Twycross, 2015:1). The types of validity and reliability are analysed below.

#### **Validity**

Saunders *et al.* (2012:429) distinguished four types of validity that were used in assessing the validity of the research process namely:

##### **Internal validity**

When a closed questionnaire is capable of evaluating what it was designed for in the first place, it is said to have internal validity. In this study, internal validity was achieved through the use of the pilot study to correct ambiguous questions and other potential problems.

##### **Content validity**

This refers to the scale of questions in a closed questionnaire that are able to furnish sufficient answers to the research questions supported by the literature review. In this study, the pilot study was used to verify the content validity.

##### **Criterion-related validity**

This refers to the research questions that can produce a precise estimate of a respondent's behaviour. In this study, the pilot study was used to enforce criterion-related validity.

##### **Construct validity**

Refers to the capability of the scale of questions had in fact evaluated the main research questions and objectives as initially envisaged. In this study, the pilot study was used to achieve construct validity.

#### **Reliability**

Reliability is described simply as uniformity and there are three ways of measuring reliability as differentiated by Saunders *et al.* (2012:430) below:

##### **Internal consistency**

Internal consistency occurs when the feedback to questions in the closed questionnaire is compared to evaluate uniformity of feedback to all questions. According to Tavakol and Dennick (2011:53), Cronbach's Alpha is generally used to assess internal consistency in a set of questions and an alpha beyond 0.70 is viewed as reliable. In this study, Cronbach's Alpha was used to measure the coefficient of reliability of the research instrument. In the main study, Cronbach's Alpha was 0.803 which is far beyond the prescribed range from 0.70. It can be concluded that the reliability of the main study was sufficiently reliable.

##### **Alternative form**

This provides uniformity throughout the questionnaire by correlating feedback to alternative forms of similar questions. In this study, check questions were applied in all sections of the questions: B, C and D, in order to measure reliability of responses. A typical example of check question is between Question 7.9 which stated that "employees were requested or invited to submit suggestions in order to achieve the proposed



technological change” and Question 8.7 which stated that “employees are given opportunity to give inputs on the proposed change”. Based on the above, it can be confirmed that the alternative form of reliability was adopted in this study.

### Data Analysis

The structured process of splitting information after the collection of primary data to establish meanings, associations and tendencies between research variables is called data analysis (Mouton, 2013:108). Descriptive statistics focus on the process of combining collected quantitative data regarding the scale of evaluation, whereas inferential statistics focuses on the tools used in reaching conclusions based on quantitative data regarding the research participants (Bless *et al.*, 2013:264). In this study, descriptive and inferential statistics were used to examine the research questions and make inferences. Furthermore, the following statistical tests were adopted in the study:

### Statistical tests

Once data was collected using the closed questionnaire, descriptive and inferential statistics were calculated using the Statistical Package for Social Science software. Data analysis tools include tables, which can demonstrate the rate of events (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:472). The pie chart is a statistical tool used to illustrate the total number of research subjects; its main advantage is providing visuals or percentages of respondents to simplify the interpretation of research results (Rouse, 2011). In this study, tables and pie charts were used in the presentation and interpretation of the research findings.

It was found that the majority of statistical tests are premised on the assumption that data goes through a normal distribution (Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012:1-2). Moreover, it is also important to conduct a normality test on collected data and to have evidence before assumption on normality is made (Wachs, 2015:1). In this study, the test of normality was conducted and the outcome confirmed violation of the normality assumption of a parametric test, hence Kolmogorov-Smirnov with the Lilliefors Significance Correction and Shapiro-Wilk were used. Moreover, the Kruskal-Wallis test showed that the collected data is not normally distributed, hence a non-parametric test was used (Lani, 2010:1-2).

Modal response is used as a measuring tool for linking research variables and its main advantage is to ascertain the frequent response of a research question (Zabelsky, 2012:1). In this study, modal response was used in comparing the frequency of responses to certain research questions.

### Limitations of the Study

#### Delimitations

This study focussed on issues pertaining to managing employee resistance to change at the company. The research was conducted in their Security Department. As a result, the findings of this research cannot be generalised to other departments or to the general mining industry.

#### Limitations

Some of respondents did not access or complete the online survey because they were either on leave or because they resigned from the company during the period when the survey was distributed. Moreover, some respondents started the online survey but did not complete the entire survey: the drop-out had a nominal effect on the overall response rate. To mitigate the impact of a possible low response rate, a reminder was distributed via email to all sampled respondents to complete the study within a stipulated deadline.

### Assumptions

Several assumptions were made in carrying out this study, namely:

Some respondents may be suspicious and afraid to give out information deemed confidential in the company, which may distort the research.

Service delivery in the Security Department will improve by using the new technology.

### Ethical Considerations

The following ethical principles were observed during the research process:

#### Ensuring participants have given informed consent

The principle of informed consent deals with voluntary participation and furnishing research respondents with relevant information regarding the aim of the study (Mouton, 2013:244). In this study, the research process was clearly explained to each respondent prior to starting the survey and informed consent was compulsory on the introductory page. In the event of failure to agree to “I accept terms of research” by clicking the tick box, the participant was not able to continue with the study.

#### Ensuring no harm comes to participants

The researcher must refrain from making use of threatening remarks or acts of violence and misleading participants on research objectives (Flick, 2014:50). In this study, no respondent was either threatened or harmed. Participation by respondents was absolutely voluntarily and this ethical principle was reinforced in the cover letter of the study.

#### Ensuring confidentiality and anonymity

The credibility of the research will be maintained and improved if respondents are guaranteed confidentiality and non-disclosure of their identities (Dawson, 2010:154). In this study, the research process was clearly explained to each respondent prior to starting with the online survey, that is, the exclusion of the use of names or locations of respondents and the maintenance of confidentiality indicated on the introductory page. There were sufficient safeguards of guaranteed anonymity in the study as explained above.

#### Ensuring that permission is obtained

The success of the study is reliant on the researcher’s achieving entry to the relevant organisation in order to acquire primary information (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:210). The letter of permission was distributed to all sampled respondents through an email during the invitation to participate in the study via a web-page link.

### Results and Interpretation of Findings

#### Introduction

The research took three weeks to achieve an overall response rate of 75.7% after the online closed questionnaire was distributed to a sample of 115; 87 completed responses were returned. The test of assumptions on normality is analysed as follows:

#### Test of Normality

The test of normality on the information was carried out and the results showed that the information does not follow a normal distribution pattern. A non-parametric test should therefore be carried out on the collected data. This conclusion, to use a non-parametric test, was chosen because of the positive tests of both the Kolmogorov-Smirnov with the Lilliefors Significance Correction and Shapiro-Wilk. Furthermore, the reliability statistics for the main study were above 0.803 and therefore the internal consistency was good.

For example, Section B was  $\alpha = 0.803$ ,  $n = 11$ ; Section C,  $\alpha = 0.841$ ,  $n = 10$ ; and Section D,  $\alpha = 0.877$ ,  $n = 10$ . The results of the main study are presented and interpreted as follows:

The statistics reveal that majority of respondents at 73.6% were male.

The results show that the majority age group which participated in the research is the 36-45 group. 57.5% of respondents were between 36-45 years, 32.2% of respondents were between 46-55 years, 6.9% of respondents were between 26-35 years and 3.4% of respondents were between 56-60 years ( $N = 87$ ).

32.2% of respondents had a second year certificate and constituted the majority of the respondents. The second largest sample was 25.3%. Furthermore, 16.1% of respondents had an undergraduate qualification and 1.1% of respondents had a bachelor of technology/honours degree ( $N=87$ ).

The majority of respondents comprised shift supervisors (superintendents or protection officers). The shift supervisors constitute 54% of respondents followed by 17.2% of respondents who were specialists (human resources development officers or investigators). In addition, 2.3% of respondents were senior protection services managers, 5.7% of respondents were protection services managers, 11.5% of respondents were senior superintendents, and 9.2% of respondents were non-supervisory (system administrators or technicians) ( $N = 87$ ).

The majority of the respondents were black whilst the whites were second in number of respondents. Of the respondents 62.1% were black, 36.8% of respondents were white and 1.1% of respondents were Indian ( $N = 87$ ).

43.7% of respondents had between 10 and 20 years' service in the organisation; 40.2% of respondents had between 5 and 10 years' service; 9.2% had more than 20 years' service; 4.6% of respondent's number of years of service in the organisation was between 3 and 5 years; and 1.1% of respondent's number of years of service was between 1 and 3 years and less than 1 year ( $N = 87$ ). The research findings show that 83.9% have been employed for between 5 and 20 years. It seems that the majority of research respondents were employees with long service in the organisation.

64.4% of respondents agree there is communication about change in the organisation; 21.8% of respondents strongly agree that there is communication; 5.7% of respondents don't know; 6.9% of respondents disagree; and 1.1% of respondents strongly disagree with the statement ( $N=87$ ). The data has median = 2; skewness = 1.310 with standard error = .260; kurtosis = 2.556 with standard error = .514. These figures accept that the majority of respondents at the company agree that they were informed of the reasons for introducing a proposed technological change in streamlining work processes.

It appears that the employees at the company confirmed that there is effective communication of the planned change. The research findings concur with Muller-Camen *et al.* (2011:361) as they emphasise the need for multi-dimensional communication strategies for change management to be successful

The findings further support the importance of open communication in change management, as highlighted by Nel *et al.* (2011:457-458) and Quinn *et al.* (2012:21-23) in the Kotter 8 phase change model for leading change. It can be concluded that the company has robustly used multi-

dimensional communication strategies in the change management process.

64.4% of respondents agree that change processes are communicated in the organisation. Of the respondents, 11.5% strongly agree that there is effective communication on organisational systems, 5.7% of respondents don't know, 16.1% of respondents disagree that the whole change process was explained to them and 2.3% of respondents strongly disagree with the statement ( $N = 87$ ). The majority of the respondents at the company agree that they are satisfied with the degree of communication of organisational process. The results have a median = 2; skewness = 1.038 with standard error = .260; kurtosis = .397 with standard error = .514. From this set of statistics, it appears that the employees appear to confirm that there is effective communication on the whole change process.

The research findings support Schoemer (2010:75) who has suggested an integrated communication approach in the change process in order to minimise employee resistance. It can be concluded that the company has applied an integrated communication approach in the change management process.

#### **Kruskal-Wallis test of correlation between race and response on effective communication**

The results show that the responses of the white population were distributed evenly across the 'strongly agree' response to the 'strongly disagree' response, whilst black people's responses were skewed towards agreeing to the question of effective communication. It looks as though there is a positive correlation between race and the response on effective communication on the change process at the company.

The long-term benefits for implementation of the proposed technological change were explained to employees 62.1% of respondents agree that change management benefits were explained to employees. The finding further shows that 11.5% of respondents strongly agree that the benefits of the change were explained beforehand, 11.5% of respondents don't know, 13.8% of respondents disagree and 1.1% of respondents strongly disagree with the statement ( $N=87$ ). The statistics of the results have median = 2; skewness = .929 with standard error = .260; kurtosis = .418 with standard error = .514. From these statistics, it appears that the majority of respondents at the company confirmed that long-term benefits of change were fully explained.

The research findings concur with Nickols (2010:2-5) on an empirical-rational change strategy where proper awareness and benefits of change were clearly explained to employees who are then inclined to support the proposed change if motivated with a reward. It can be concluded that the company could adopt a rational-empirical change strategy in its change management process.

#### **Trust in Management**

##### **Employees trust management on proposed technological change**

35% of respondents agree on whether there is trust between management and employees. On the other hand, 31% of respondents don't know and 23% of respondents disagree with the statement, as indicated in Table 4.6. In addition to the above research findings, 9.2% of respondents strongly agree that there is trust between management and employees. Lastly, 1.1% of respondents strongly disagree with the statement. With the statistics of sample ( $N=87$ ) the median = 3; skewness = .030 with standard error = .260; kurtosis = -.0803 with standard error = .514, it appears that the employees at the

company confirmed that they do not trust management on the proposed change.

The research findings concur with Mullins (2010:760); Stark (2010:1-2); Quast (2012:2); Grobler *et al.* (2012:331) and Smit *et al.* (2013:255), as they claimed that lack of trust between change recipients and change strategists was one of common obstacles to change. The implications of the mistrust between employees and management at the company might hinder smooth implementation of the planned change.

### **Change Support**

Training or on-going support will be provided to affected employees before the rollout of the proposed change

The findings of the research show that 67.8% of respondents agree that on-going support or training is provided to affected employees. 17.2% of respondents don't know whilst 9.2% of respondents strongly agree that on-going support was provided to affected employees. From the statistics of (N=87), median = 2; skewness = 1.201 with standard error = .260; kurtosis = 2.713 with standard error = .514, it looks as though the employees of the company confirmed that training or on-going support is being provided to affected employees before the rollout of the proposed technological change.

The research findings concur with Pasmore (2011:277); Nel *et al.* (2011:432); Lipman (2013:2); Huang (2015:12) and Brown (2014:127), as they emphasised that to mitigate employee resistance to change, the organisation is required to provide change support mechanisms, such as training and awareness programmes. It can be concluded that training or on-going support being provided by the company to affected employees will increase the buy-in and give support to the change management process.

### **Research participant responses**

#### **Management introduced policies or procedures to support changes**

The results of the findings show that 52.9% of respondents agree that policies are developed in the company in order to support change. Contrary to this, 25.3% of respondents said they don't know and 13.8% of respondents strongly agree that supportive policies to change management are formulated. With statistics of (N=87), median = 2; skewness = .432 with standard error = .260; kurtosis = -.070 with standard error = .514, it appears that the majority of respondents agree that management introduced policies or procedures to support changes.

The research findings agree with Quinn *et al.* (2012:21-23); and Nel *et al.* (2011: 457-458), as they highlighted that the introduction of policies or procedures to support change will result in sustaining the momentum of change. It can be concluded that the introduction of policies or and procedures in change management by the company has merged the achievements made and increased the level of change support.

#### **Employees will have options to be either redeployed or to exit the company voluntarily**

The research findings show that 57.5% of respondents agree that they were given options in the change management process whilst 21.8% of respondents did not know. Thirdly, 16.1% of respondents strongly agree with the statement. With statistics of (N=87), median = 2; skewness = .771 with standard error = .260; kurtosis = 1.458 with standard error = .514, it appears that the majority of respondents confirmed that they were given options to either be redeployed or exit the company voluntarily.

The research findings agree with Nickols (2010:2-5) as they said that change is achieved through employees being taken along through consultation with options in order to get their buy-in as normative-re-educative change strategy. It can be inferred that, in addition to the empirical-rational change strategy, the company has a choice in adopting a combination of change strategies, including normative-re-educative, to intensify the buy-in from its workforce and minimise the level of resistance.

#### **Research Question 2 solicited information on employee behaviour and experience during change management. Employees are threatened by the proposed technological change**

The response distribution indicating whether change threatens employees. The response shows that 25.3% of respondents strongly agree that they are threatened by change in the organisation. In addition to that, 52.9% of respondents agree that change threatens them; 11.5% of respondents don't know; and 10.3% of respondents disagree with the statement that change threatens them. From the statistics of (N=87), median = 2; skewness = .780 with standard error = .260; kurtosis = .153 with standard error = .514. It appears that employees are generally threatened by change at the company. The research findings concur with Mullins (2010:760) and Grobler *et al.* (2012:331) as they cautioned that normally workers are threatened by change. The implications of the findings are that employees could be in an emotional state of fear and uncertainty displaying resistant behaviour (Gold, 2015:1-2). If the change management process at the company is not handled humanely and very well it could create an opportunity for change resisters to exploit the delicate situation and become a common obstacle to change.

Another reason for resisting change was analysed to determine the employee's responses on whether they fear change.

#### **Employees are afraid of the proposed technological change**

The results show that 63.2% of respondents agree that they are afraid of technological change. Furthermore, when the results are ranked, the respondents who strongly agree were in second place with 21.8%. Smaller percentages below ten 'don't know' and six disagree that they are afraid of change. With statistics of (N=87), median = 2; skewness = .908 with standard error = .260; kurtosis = 1.461 with standard error = .514. It seems that employees of the company are generally afraid of change.

The research findings agree with Pihlak and Alas (2012:235) and Smit *et al.* (2013:255), as they warned that fear was the main cause of resistance to change. Sonenshein (2010:496-498), has warned that affected employees could display behaviour indicating denialism or opposition. The implications of the findings are that change management at the company has reached boiling point where affected employees are going through a period of uncertainty and fear. The reaction of employees should not be ignored or undermined as it might affect smooth implementation of the change process.

#### **Employee Participation**

Employees were requested or invited to submit suggestions in order to achieve the proposed technological change

Of respondents, 43.7% agree with the statement that employees are invited to participate in the change management process. This is followed by 25.3% of respondents who acknowledged that they don't know if they are invited to participate.

Furthermore, 21.8% of respondents disagree that they are consulted. The statistic values of (N=87), median = 2; skewness = .304 with standard error = .260; kurtosis = -.731 with standard error = .514 indicate a neutral position as to whether employees are invited to participate in change programmes.

The research findings concur with Pasmore (2011:277); Nel *et al.* (2011:432); Brown (2014:127) as they stressed that employee participation forms part of motivation and a strategy to mitigate employee resistance to change. It can be concluded that the company has involved its employees in the change management process, thus encouraging the buy-in and proactively mitigating employee resistance to change. Moreover, a correlation of seniority level of respondents and whether there is employee participation at the company is analysed as follows.

#### **Kruskal-Wallis Test between seniority level of respondents and whether there is employee participation in the organisation**

The respondents in the categories of senior protection services manager and protection services manager disagree with the statement that employees are consulted whereas lower level employees agree that employee participation is carried out in the organisation. There is a positive correlation between the seniority level of employees and their perception of how employee participation strategies are implemented at the company.

#### **Human Resource Strategies in Change Management**

##### **Employees feel the organisation is caring of their careers**

51.2% of respondents agree that there is an employee wellness programme that shows that the organisation cares about its employees. On the contrary, 24.4% of respondents disagree that employee wellness programmes are in place in the company, whilst 11.6% of respondents gave a 'do not know' response. The statistics of (N=87), median = 2; skewness = .559 with standard error = .260; kurtosis = -.927 with standard error = .514 indicate that the majority of respondents agreed that caring programmes are in place in the company.

The research findings concur with Robbins and Coulter (2012:191); Quinn *et al.* (2012:21-23); and Nel *et al.* (2011:457-458) that caring organisations should provide employee wellness or career support programmes in order to instil the new culture and reduce the employee's stress during the change management. It can be concluded that the company has an integrated employee wellness programme in its change management programme that is fully supported by the change recipients. Furthermore, a correlation of race and respondents' information on whether the company has employee caring programmes is analysed below.

#### **Kruskal-Wallis Test between race of respondents and whether there is an employee wellness programme in the organisation**

The results reveal that the black population generally agrees that employee wellness programmes are implemented in the company's change management. On the other hand, there is a neutral conclusion in the white population as to whether there are employee wellness programmes. This shows that there is a strong relationship between race and employee perception on the implementation of employees' wellness programmes. Lastly, a cross-tabulation of results on seniority and the response of research participants was done.

#### **Kruskal-Wallis Test between employee job level of respondents and whether there is a wellness programme in the organisation**

It appears that low-level employees agree that the company has employee wellness programmes whilst senior level employees disagree that employee wellness programmes are well in place. It can be concluded that there is a positive correlation between seniority and perception of the implementation of employee wellness programmes in change management at the company.

#### **Employee Behaviour in Change Management**

The organisation is experiencing poor work attendance after the proposed change was communicated to employees. Of the respondents 40.2% disagree that there was absenteeism during the company's change management processes, 34.5% of respondents answered they do not know if there is poor work attendance whilst 17.2% of respondents agree that the employees work attendance decreased. The statistics of (N=87), median = 3; skewness = -.353 with standard error = .260; kurtosis = -.339 with standard error = .514 show that the respondents disagree that the company experienced employee absenteeism during the change management processes.

The research findings refute the assertion made by Robbins and Coulter (2012:191), as they found that low work attendance is a sign of stress from workers. In addition, the research findings refuted Grobler *et al.* (2014:330), who said that poor work attendance was one of the early warnings signifying unwillingness to accept the change. It can be concluded that the company did not experience absenteeism during change management.

Furthermore, an analysis of employee complaints during the change management was carried out.

#### **There was a high rate of employee complaints after the proposed change was announced**

35.6% of respondents agree that employee complaints increased during change management, 26.4% respondents gave an 'I don't know' answer whilst 26.4% of respondents disagree that employee complaints increased during the period of change. With statistics of (N=87), median = 3; skewness = .166 with standard error = .260; kurtosis = -.820 with standard error = .514, it appears that the respondents somewhat agree that employee complaints increased. It appears that the employees of the company confirmed that employee complaints increased.

The research findings concur with Robbins and Coulter (2012:191) that high rate of employee complaints were a sign of employees in stress or unhappy during change management. It can be concluded that the company experienced a high rate of employee complaints during the change management. The implication for the company is that employees might be unhappy or still afraid of the planned change. Further analysis on employee behaviour was carried out to assess the responses of research participants on whether management gave on-going feedback on change processes.

#### **Employees receive regular feedback or progress on proposed change**

63.2% of respondents agree that management constantly gave employees feedback on the progress of change processes. Only 18.4% of respondents disagree that management gave feedback on change processes. The statistics of N=87, median = 2; skewness = .934 with standard error = .260 kurtosis = -.030 with standard error = .514 shows that respondents agree that management gave on-going feedback on the progress of change processes.

The research findings refute the claim by Mullins (2010:760) and Grobler *et al.* (2012:331) as they said that poor communication about the proposed change was one of common obstacles to change. It can be inferred that the company was excellent in giving employees regular feedback during the change management, thus fostering a positive employee attitude. Research Question 3 solicited information on how management handled the change process so that recommendations to minimise resistance to change at the company can be made.

### **Change Process**

#### **The response distribution of research participants**

40.2% agree that they are aware of the reasons for the change process whilst 31% of respondents disagree that they understand the reason of change. An 'I do not know' answer to this statement was given by 12.6%. With a statistics ( $r = -0.469$ ,  $N = 87$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ), it seems that the frequent communication or updates on the proposed change do not translate into respondents comprehending the rationale for introducing the planned change.

The research findings support the claim that the change process could be sabotaged by a lack of understanding of the compelling reasons for change (Prosci, 2015:4). It can be concluded that some the company's employees, based on the level of seniority, did not understand the reasons for change during the change management. It is suggested that multi-dimensional communication strategies be extended to those employees who might not have understood the rationale of the proposed change. Furthermore, a correlation test was done to check which group of employees does not understand the reasons for change. Table 4.21 shows the cross-tabulation of the two factors.

#### **Kruskal-Wallis test between the level of seniority and understanding of the reasons for change**

16% of respondents with 5-10 years' experience gave a 'disagree' answer on whether they understand the reasons for change, whilst 10% of respondents with 10-20 years of service also gave a 'disagree' answer about whether they understand the reason for change. Furthermore, 17% of employees with 10-20 years of service confirmed that they do not understand the reason for the change. With statistics of ( $H(5) = 11.117$ ,  $p = 0.049$ ), it appears that employees of the company do not understand the reasons for change.

In addition to understanding of the reasons for change, an analysis was done on whether management consulted employee representative organisations.

#### **Management consultation of employee representative organisations on the proposed change**

54% of respondents agree that employee representative organisations were consulted. The statistics of ( $N=87$ ), median = 2; skewness = .095 with standard error = .260; kurtosis = -.128 with standard error = .514 show that the majority of respondents agree that management consulted employee representative organisations on the proposed change.

The research findings concur with Quinn *et al.* (2012:21-23) and Nel *et al.* (2011:457-458) as they emphasised that building a guiding coalition through a consultative platform could result in removing obstacles to empower the change process. It can be inferred that the company has widely and openly consulted employee representative organisations during the change management. A further analysis on the change process was conducted and the respondents were asked whether an outsider was appointed to drive change.

### **Appointment of a change agent**

43.7% did not know whether the proposed change will be driven by a change agent whilst 39.1% of respondents agree with the statement. The statistics of ( $N=87$ ), median = 3; skewness = .370 with standard error = .260; kurtosis = .764 with standard error = .514 shows a 50-50 ratio on awareness of whether a change process will be driven by an external change agent.

The findings of the research support Pasmore (2011:277); Nel *et al.* (2011:432); and Brown (2014:127) and Robbins and Coulter (2012:183), as they insist that an external change agent could be viewed as independent and objective, and a strategy to mitigate employee resistance to change. It can be concluded that the company has to decide on whether to use an external change agent in the change management. Moreover, an analysis of whether management explained the benefits of change process to employees was done.

#### **Management has explained incentives or rewards for acceptance of proposed change**

42.5% of respondents agree with the statement that benefits of the change process were explained to employees. When ranked, those respondents who did not know were second with a 23% proportion. Thirdly, 21.8% of respondents disagree that management explained the benefits of change. The statistics of ( $N=87$ ), median = 2; skewness = .288 with standard error = .260; kurtosis = -.790 with standard error = .514 seem to indicate that respondents confirmed that management at the company explained the change process benefits to employees.

The research findings concur with Pasmore (2011:277); Nel *et al.* (2011:432); Brown (2014:127) and Pattanayak (2010:189), as they pointed out that incentives or rewards to employees serve as a motivation in the change process and a strategy to mitigate employee resistance to change. It can be inferred that the company explained that incentives or rewards will be used in change management. In addition to the factors above, further analysis on the change process was done by looking at whether there was a 'no change vision' supported by all change stakeholders.

#### **Change management vision**

- 40.2% of respondents agree that a change vision was formulated whilst 32.2% of respondents do not know whether there was a change vision. Table 4.25 shows that 12.6% of respondents strongly agree with statement D5, 10.3% of respondents disagree with the statement and 4.6% of respondents strongly disagree. With statistics of ( $N=87$ ), median = 2; skewness = .566 with standard error = .260; kurtosis = .190 with standard error = .514, it seems as though employees at the company confirmed that a change management vision was developed to guide employees.

The research findings concur with Quinn *et al.* (2012:21-23) and Nel *et al.* (2011:457) as they emphasise that leading change successfully requires the organisation to communicate the change management vision. It can be concluded that the company has openly and honestly developed and communicated the vision for the proposed change to its employees. Lastly, the change management style was analysed.

#### **Change management style**

32.2% of the respondents agree that management imposes change on employees whilst 31% of respondents disagree that management imposes change to employees. With a statistic of ( $N=87$ ), median = 3; skewness = -.006 with standard error = .260; kurtosis = -1.133 with standard error = .514, it appears

that respondents had a mixed perception on the management style as the responses on whether management imposed change on employees were 50-50.

The research findings support the view by Nickols (2010:2-5), as they stated that change imposed on employees by management could be regarded as a power-coercive change strategy. It can be concluded that the change management approach of forcing employees to accept the change will not work at the company.

### Conclusion

On the first research question, it can be concluded that most of the employees confirmed a positive impact of planned change except for mistrust between employees and management. Fear of the unknown or of change was confirmed as the main factor leading to employee resistance to change at the company. It was also found that employee complaints increased during the change process. Overall, the study has categorically answered all research questions.

The study has shown that there were grains of mistrust between employees and management during the planned change. The effect or implications of the mistrust between employees and management at the company might hinder smooth implementation of the change processes, regardless of the extensive multi-dimensional communication strategies implemented by the organisation. It is therefore recommended that further research be undertaken on how the momentum of the change process can be sustained.

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