



Let's Solve

# Managing Change in the Defense Sector

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The Defense readiness of a country is measured on the parameter of its war preparedness i.e., its ability to provision, maintain, monitor and quickly mobilize its resources as and when required, which gives a decisive edge to the defence forces in the case of conflict. Hence, more and more countries are emphasizing on the usage of automated technology in military activities, such as intelligence gathering, navigation, weapons delivery and supply chain management of inventory for gaining battle advantage. This need to evolve is based on the rapidly changing global scenarios, wherein traditional warfare techniques has been challenged due to newer threats like global terrorism and meltdown of economies.

Traditionally, military dominance has not only ensured the security of the nation, but has also been seen to pave a way for economic growth of the country. However, with the changing scenarios, Defense Forces are under pressure to increase their efficacy at reduced costs. This has become a universal fact, which is slowly but steadily being accepted by countries all over, and hence, are attempting to manage this change through automation of their supply chain mechanism and reduction of manpower. Defense Forces across the global are now opening up to change management for ensuring acceptance and adoption of changes for achieving desired benefits.

Since World War II, the top military powers or Super Powers as they are referred to, had increased the numbers of their military bases across the globe for gaining military supremacy. Whereas, their allies assisted them in global operations both for preserving peace and fighting enemy militia. However, considering the scale of operations

involved in initiating international movement of forces, along with the heavy costs, more and more defence services are opting for process automation. This will help in streamlining their procedures for achieving transparency, accuracy, accountability, reduction of cost, reduction of effort and most importantly, empowering top leadership in making informed and intelligent decisions, both in peace time and during wars. It may be noted that cost reduction measures adopted could also include a reduction in the head count of personnel, which may lead to loss in morale and requires change management skills.

Managing change in defence sector is very difficult. Generally, this sector is bound with lots of regulations that makes employees resistant to change. Therefore, it is necessary to identify and analyse case studies of successful change management initiatives in the sector. A good example for managing change in Defense sector, is the initiative of the British Government in 2010. The British Comptroller & Auditor General (C&AG) office had advised the British Ministry of Defense to engage in a major programme of communications, as a change management initiative for transforming the British Defense organizations into more leaner and meaner units by reduction of its civilian personnel by 29,000 and its military personnel by 25,000 by 2015.<sup>1</sup>

Global Consulting leader, McKinsey, in its report on "Managing change in the military dated winter of 2014/2015," has also highlighted that Defense spending are under pressure for some time now in the developed world and defense spending began

<sup>1</sup>Refer <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmpubacc/1905/1905.pdf>



to fall in many countries after the global financial crisis of 2008, including the European Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization such as UK and Germany. Even the United States of America had plans to reduce spending by about USD 65 billion between 2012 and 2015. The changes envisaged by the NATO countries including the US, not only include pooling and sharing of equipment, but also change to fundamental processes such as procurement, logistics, and maintenance, which are not minor adjustments. As per the report, these changes are transformational in nature and require major shifts in mind-sets, behaviours, and capabilities.<sup>2</sup>

As a result of the afore-mentioned research, it is evident that to make a significant difference in the defense sector, it is preferable to engage in change programs that aim to improve the operational effectiveness, rather than simply reduction of cost. Therefore, more and more countries are focusing on changing their processes and organizational structure, rather than simply removal of personnel or mechanisms plainly aiming at reduction of costs. In this regard, automation of logistics by 28 of the existing NATO nations (SAP implementation) such as UK, Israel, Germany, Canada, US, etc serves as a good example for process simplification and automation initiatives, whereas the restructuring done by the Danish Defence Forces carried out from 2004 to 2009, serves as a prime example for balancing the redundant teeth to tail ratio of the armed forces. However, despite the benefits of restructuring, the change is not easily accepted and adopted by military organizations.

Considering the high complexity involved in defense automations and their large impact efficient management of the people side of change, is of prime importance. Further, building the right capabilities such as change management is a prerequisite to achieving and sustaining change in any organization.

Culturally, defense forces are trained to maintain the tradition and suspect the unknown. This can lead to a personnel being resistant to change. People are very much attached to their existing way of functioning since the same is time tested and can be banked upon during emergencies therefore, precise change management initiatives are required for enhancing the awareness and desire to a defense personnel for adopting change.

Because of the phenomena of changing defense forces into leaner and more effective setup globally, defense sector organizations in other military mighty nations, such as India and China also started to utilize Change Management as a crucial element for successful modernization of forces. However, despite the improved awareness with regards to change management in the sector, it is often a folly to presume that since defense organizations work in a top-driven manner, managing of change will be easily to handle. Defense-related automation projects have been seen to falter at the change management level, since more emphasis is given **to** the project management and contract management, rather than actual change management activities. Therefore, it is necessary to align with the change sponsor right at the

<sup>2</sup>Refer [https://www.mckinsey.com/~/\\_media/McKinsey/dotcom/client\\_service/Public%20Sector/McK%20on%20Defense%20Issue%209/MoD\\_9\\_Five\\_principles\\_to\\_manage\\_change\\_in\\_the\\_military.ashx](https://www.mckinsey.com/~/_media/McKinsey/dotcom/client_service/Public%20Sector/McK%20on%20Defense%20Issue%209/MoD_9_Five_principles_to_manage_change_in_the_military.ashx)

beginning, and ensure that the sponsor exhibits the required characteristics of a change leader throughout the change implementation.

Another difficulty that will be encountered during change implementation is the change in key defense personnel due to transfers, etc. This impacts the implementation timelines, result in loss of knowledge and may lead to deviation in the plan and eventually the course of action.

Therefore, change management is required to work in greater collaboration with project management, to ensure that required mitigations are in place and effective.

Therefore, considering that defense forces constitute of a unique mix of both civil and uniformed staff, the following measures are important for ushering in successful change:

- **Understand their value systems, work culture and overall work environment** – It is difficult to bring change to an organization without understanding its culture. Therefore, to understand the DNA of culturally traditional organizations as the defense forces, it is necessary to understand their value system and work culture to the core.
- **Connecting with end users and sensitizing the environment** – Awareness and understanding of the users regarding the impending change are also crucial and requires direct involvement of the sponsor; i.e. the key stakeholder or the leadership.

Overall, the key elements that would be necessary for ensuring successful implementation and adoption are listed below:

- Leadership connect and involvement - Sponsors and key stakeholders need to be involved in every phase of change.
- Periodic communication with the environment - Using different modes of communication to disseminate the knowledge and channelize the information flow, is critical to keep the stakeholders engaged and involved.
- Change Sensitization - At the initial stage, as well as with achieving milestones, sensitizing the impacted persona plays a vital role.
- Capacity building mechanism - A proper training and knowledge-sharing mechanism that is mostly person-agnostic is a key requirement of Defense transformation projects and need to be planned and executed diligently.
- Reinforcement Measures – It is important to ensure that people adopt change for good and do not go back to the old ways of working. Further, it is also necessary to acknowledge the efforts of people who not only accept change, but also help in percolating the same within the organization.



## Preparing for Change

To bring some method into the madness, it is necessary to utilize time tested change management methodologies and frameworks such as PROSCI. This helps in organizing the people side of change management efforts in the right direction, and helps in creating greater awareness and desire in the sponsors towards their responsibilities for managing change.

Creation of an internal change management team in the organization also helps in percolation of change, along with creating ownership for handling change as internal people understand their organization culture better. Sponsors must be directly involved in communicating the change and must be the biggest advocates of the change.

## About the Author



### Chetan Ticku

Chetan is a certified Change Management Practitioner, with 15+ years of experience in Organizational Change Management and Business Transformation Domain.

He has been leading Change Management initiatives in the Defense sector for over two years, and has been involved in preparation and execution of Change Management strategy for smoother adoption of change by Defense organizations in the Emerging Market.

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