



## POST-ACQUISITION CHANGE MANAGEMENT: AN EXPERIENCE OF EMPLOYEES OF GHANAIAN TELECOMMUNICATION COMPANY

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### ABSTRACT

*Success of change management after acquisition has been a major issue in the literature, because studies (Burke, 2002; Probst and Raisch, 2005) have revealed that most of these companies suffer successful transition for several reasons. Drawing on the recent works in the literature, the purpose of this paper is to examine how Vodafone PLC Ghana has managed its change process and assess the effects of the process on work outcome and processes and organizational performance. The paper present findings from quantitative research involving 120 employees who were with the organization before the acquisition and spread within several departments of the organization. The research finds reveals that overall the change management process was successful and the primary reason for the success is adherence of management to propositions made by several authors in the literature.*

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Globalization and deregulation of markets have opened up new ways by which business are done today. Within this context, mergers and acquisitions represents part of corporate/business strategy used by many firms to achieve various objectives such as competitiveness and growth, penetrating into new markets and new geographic regions, gaining technical/management expertise and knowledge and allocation of capital. Associated with acquisition and mergers is the key issues of change management.

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Every acquisition entails modification of organizations social identity and this is liable to introduction of a new philosophy or culture. As such, several authors have highlighted the importance of change management process in the attainment of organizational goals after acquisition and merger. [David and Singh \(1993\)](#) and [Gall \(1991\)](#) concluded from research that confrontation against the introduction of changes within the newly-acquired subsidiaries as one reason for disappointing performance.

Furthermore, Employee's acceptance and backing for organizational change programs has also long being contended for the success of any planed organizational change ([Armenakis et al., 1993](#); [Miller et al., 1994](#)). Accordingly, [Piderit \(2000\)](#) poses, attention in the literature is much more focused on understanding influences that shape employees' responses, thus attitude and behavior to change, with the aim of improving employees support and acceptance of change initiatives. Besides, other facets of change process that can facilitate effective change management have been explored. Such examples include procedural fairness ([Brockner, 2002](#)); communication ([Schweiger and DeNisi, 1991](#)); leadership ([Kotter, 1996](#)); openness to the change ([Wanberg and Banas, 2000](#)) and organizational commitment to change ([Judge et al., 1999](#)).

The theoretical literature dealing with change management is vast, well documented and noncontroversial. In spite of this reality, regrettably, most of the change initiatives undertaken by organizations fail to meet expectations ([Burke, 2002](#); [Probst and Raisch, 2005](#)). [Herold et al. \(2007\)](#) explains this may be due to non-application of what managers know when it comes to change management. Furthermore, there is too much focus on change management practices and processes at the expense of other factors that shapes employees reaction to change.

In Ghana, one of the organizations that have gone through massive change management is the recent brownfield acquisition or takeover of Ghana Telecom by Vodafone PLC. Though fiercely resisted by employees and Ghanaians in general, the sale went through resulting in massive changes to the organisational structure. With this comes change in management style with related consequences which has been described by observers as acrimonious.

It was therefore expected that management will introduce change management practices and predictably, employees are also expected to resist such modification due to the initial resistance to the takeover. Whilst studies investigating change management have demonstrated a gap between theory and success in practice, of much concern is the applicability of change management literature in an African context due to cultural and social differences.

The focus of this study is to assess how change management was handled within Vodafone PLC, assess its effect on work outcome and processes and its successes after the initial confrontation and adoption of measures that are foreign in light with African culture.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Change is an ever-present feature of organizational life, both at an operational and strategic level ([Burnes, 2004](#)) and [Morgan \(1997\)](#) compared change to "a living organism" undergoing different changes.

Organizational change according to [Yilmaz et al. \(2013\)](#) is "aimed either to adapt to the environment or to increase the performance by improving productivity and efficiency".The body of

literature defining the concept “change” and “change management” is vast and varied owing to specific areas of focus by researchers. Whilst [Leavitt \(1965\)](#) looked at change from the technical, social and structural perspectives, [Schein \(2005\)](#) argue change could be natural, evolutionary, planned and unplanned.

According to [Schein \(2005\)](#), change is a planned tool used to improve effectiveness at different levels of the organisation such as human resources, functional resources, technological capabilities and organisational capabilities. [Creasey \(2009\)](#) argue “ultimately, the goal of change is to improve the organization by altering how work is done”, which impacts on four main parts of the organization: (i) processes, (ii) systems, (iii) organizations structure and job roles, and (iv) how the organization operates.

Change management has been defined by [Moran and Brightman \(2001\)](#) as ‘the process of continually renewing an organization’s direction, structure, and capabilities to serve the ever-changing needs of external and internal customers’. There are various theories regarding the way in which change should be managed or implemented. Immense contribution have been done since the earliest work of [Lewin \(1951\)](#), who theorized change as progressing through successive phases namely unfreezing, moving and freezing in organizations.

Whilst [Judson \(1991\)](#) developed five stage model of implementing change, [Kotter \(1995\)](#) suggested eight ladders for change agents to follow in executing essential changes in how an organization operates. [Galpin \(1996\)](#) on the other hand proposed a model which encompassed nine wedges that form a wheel and [Armenakis et al. \(1999\)](#) suggested five components model that integrate rudiments of both the work of [Lewin \(1951\)](#) and social learning theory of ([Bandura, 1986](#)). [Yilmaz et al. \(2013\)](#) suggested, the above theories propounded by the various authors have mutual opinions thus “analyzing, planning, establishing a need for change, creating and sharing a generally accepted vision, open communication related to change with all levels of the organization, implementing, revising and institutionalizing”(pp. 2)

Another viewpoint of change management literature relates the rate of occurrence to acceptance of change. Though discontinuous and incremental change is the two main types of categorization, authors have used different terminologies. For example Whilst [Burnes \(2004\)](#) used incremental and continuous change, there is also distinction between smooth and bumpy incremental change ([Grundy, 1993; Senior, 2002](#)). [Grundy \(1993\)](#) defines discontinuous change as ‘change which is marked by rapid shifts in either strategy, structure or culture, or in all three’ According to [Luecke \(2003\)](#) discontinuous change is onetime events that take place through large, widely separated initiatives, which are followed up by long periods of consolidation and stillness and describes it as ‘single, abrupt shift from the past’ ([Luecke, 2003](#)).

Though it is argued discontinuous change is cost-effective ([Guimaraes and Armstrong, 1998](#)), other authors hinted at some of it limitation such as lack of long lasting benefits ([Love et al., 1998; Taylor and Hirst, 2001; Holloway, 2002](#)) and defensive behaviour, complacency, inward focus ([Luecke, 2003](#)). In contrast, other authors support a change that is implemented by incremental means which fundamentally keeps up with the fast moving pace of change.

[Burnes \(2004\)](#) refers to incremental change as dealing with individual parts of the organization increasingly and separately with one problem and objective at a time. Advocates of this view argue

that change is best implemented through successive, limited, and negotiated shifts (Burnes, 2004). Grundy (1993) divides incremental change into smooth and bumpy incremental change. Smooth incremental change occurs in a systematic and predictable way at a constant rate (Grundy, 1993) and bumpy change also labeled punctuated equilibrium (Balogun and Hailey, 2004; Burnes, 2004) is characterized by periods of relative peacefulness punctuated by acceleration in the pace of change (Grundy, 1993; Holloway, 2002).

To Burnes (2004) continuous change defines departmental, operational, ongoing changes and incremental change is concerned with organization-wide strategies and the ability to constantly adapt these to the demands of both the external and internal environment. Luecke (2003) suggests combining continuous and incremental change.

There are also several approaches in the literature when change is characterized based on how it comes. Literature is littered with several examples such as planned change (Burnes, 1996; Eldrod II and Tippett, 2002; Bamford and Forrester, 2003); emergent change (Bamford and Forrester, 2003; Burnes, 2004); contingency change (Dunphy and Stace, 1993) and choice change (Burnes, 1996). Lewin (1951) initiated planned change by successfully developing the three step model of unfreezing, moving and refreezing which Eldrod II and Tippett (2002) noted highlights the understanding of different states which an organization will have to go through in order to move from an unsatisfactory state to an identified desired state when it was criticized to be broad. Bamford and Forrester (2003), pose attempts were made by several authors to make the work of Lewin practical. Bullock and Batten (1985) developed a four-phase model of planned change that splits the process into exploration, planning, action and integration. Burnes classified it as a highly applicable model for most change situations.

However, several authors have criticized planned change idea. Burnes (1996; 2004) and Senior (2002) argue it is not applicable to situations that require rapid and transformational change. Burnes (1996; 2004) and Wilson (1992) also criticize the axiom of constant or a stable condition which is weakened by ever changing and fast-pace changing environment. Planned change according to Kanter *et al.* (1992) disregards a crisis situation which requires major and rapid change. The view of emergent approach sees change driven from the bottom up (Burnes, 1996; 2004; Bamford and Forrester, 2003).

Thus for change to be effective the accountability for organizational change has to become increasingly decentralized (Wilson, 1992). The emergent approach sees change as an open-ended process of adaptation to changing circumstances and conditions (Dawson, 1994; Burnes, 1996; 2004) and also as process of learning (Altman and Iles, 1998). Burnes (1996) argues, 'successful change is less dependent on detailed plans and projections than on reaching an understanding of the complexity of the issues concerned and identifying the range of available options. Dunphy and Stace (1993) also advocates for change model that is both "situational" and or "contingent". One that indicates how to vary change strategies to achieve "optimum fit" with the changing environment' (Dunphy and Stace, 1993). Their approach acknowledges the changing environment of the organization and application of range of approaches.

Management scholars have also long identified the negative effects of change on the attitudes and morals of employees if not well coordinated. According to Eby *et al.* (2000) and Oesterman

(2000) this misunderstanding may results in either passive or active resistance, resulting in unsuccessful change efforts, decrease in moral or productivity and increase in labour turnover and subsequent organizational failures. Several important attitudes have been identified by scholars for successful organizational change. Bocchino (1993) and Dutton (1992) emphasizes the presence of an environment where thrust and collaboration can be created. Martin (1998) affirms trusting management afford employees to be congruent with managerial values and works in direction with their goals. Mintzberg and Westley (1992) and Schalk *et al.* (1998) push for support for employees during change.

Employees that receive reward and encouragement for change are more likely to act voluntarily in support of change (VanYperen *et al.*, 1998). Working environment conducive with innovation and change also creates receptive context for organizational change (Zammuto and O'Connor, 1992; Oesterman, 2000). Other notable factors include perception of organization readiness (Eby *et al.*, 2000); conducive organization culture and climate (McManus *et al.*, 1995; Rodwell *et al.*, 1998); individual competence and capability (Armenakis *et al.*, 1993; Cunningham *et al.*, 2002; Jimmieson *et al.*, 2004; Devos *et al.*, 2007); employees effective commitment (Herscovitch and J.P. Meyer, 2002; Madsen *et al.*, 2005; Vakola and Nikolaou, 2005); satisfaction with organizational members (Howard and D.D. Frink, 1996; Devos *et al.*, 2007; Laschinger *et al.*, 2006); opportunities to participate (Wanberg and Banas, 2000; Cunningham *et al.*, 2002; Bordia *et al.*, 2004; Chawla and Kelloway, 2004); opportunities for development and growth (Campion and Stevens, 1991; Chawla and Kelloway, 2004; Oreg, 2006) and respect in the workplace (Shearer *et al.*, 2001; Oreg, 2006; Bernerth *et al.*, 2007).

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in five (5) out of ten (10) Regional Vodafone offices in Ghana and on employees who survived the mass redundancy after the acquisition. In all one hundred and twenty (120) staffs were sampled from an estimated population of five hundred and forty five (545). The sample used cut across different professional backgrounds of the workers. The aim is to capture from every unit of the organization the significant effect of the change management processes. The study used descriptive approach.

The choice of this method is to allow the researchers observe and describe the behaviour of the sample without influencing it in anyway (Jackson, 2009). Purposive sampling technique was use for sample selection because it allowed the researchers to deliberately focus on people who were most likely to experience, know about, or have insights in relation to the post acquisition change management in Vodafone Ghana Limited (Kerlinger, 1986). A closed ended questionnaire was used to gather data from the respondents.

The questionnaire was pre-tested in another telecommunication firm in Ghana that has experience change management due to acquisition. The aim is to remove any ambiguity, reveal unanticipated challenges regarding wording and instructions associated with the questionnaire and determined the time to be spent on questionnaire by respondents. The question have fixed response or predetermined alternatives which help in simple administration and data consistency (Malhotra and Birks, 2003). Furthermore, respondents were required to indicate their degree of agreement or

disagreement with each of a series of statements or questions on a five (5) item Likert scale rating questionnaires (1= strongly agreed; 2= agreed; 3= normal; 4= disagreed; 5=strongly disagreed), which helps to obtain an objective data; has non-forced choices “no opinion” and also helps to improve the accuracy of the data (Watson, 1992).

Data was collected between January 2012 to May 2012 and was carefully edited to eliminate inconsistencies, correct errors and also access the number of omissions in the responses. The data was coded for used by scientific package for social sciences (SPSS). It was analyzed descriptively by computing frequencies and percentages for identifiable variables.

#### 4. RESULTS

Table 1 measures the demographic characteristics of the employees. The survey indicates that more male (81.1%) were used compared to female (18.9%). Respondents working experience was assessed before and after the change.

For working experience before change, 44.6% fall within 0-5yrs, 50.0% are within 6-10yrs and 5.4% fall within 11yrs and above. In examining employees job roles, the findings indicates majority of the respondents are field engineers (35.1%) followed by retail sales advisors (27.0%), product developers (12.2%) etc. On the status of respondents, 91.1% of the workers are permanent staffs compared to 8.9% which are temporary.

**Table- 1.** Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Sex of Respondents		
Male	97	81.1
Female	23	18.9
Working Experience of Respondents with Vodafone (years)		
0-7	120	100
Working experience of Respondents with Ghana Telecom before Acquisition (years)		
0 – 5yrs	53	44.6
6 – 10yrs	60	50.0
≥ 11yrs	7.0	5.4
Current Job Roles of Respondents		
Field Engineer	42	35.1
Retailed Sales Advisor	32	27.0
Service Manager	18	14.9
Quality Assurance Officer	10	8.1
Fleet Representative	3.0	2.7
Product Developer	15	12.2
Status of Respondents		
Permanent	109	91.1
Temporary	11	8.9

Source: Field Survey, January 2012 to May 2012

The first segment of the study shown on table 2 below was to pick respondents view on type of change implemented by Vodafone PLC base on occurrence of change and how the change comes

about. The result indicates by a score of 54.17% that the respondents believe the change was both discontinuous and incremental based on occurrence followed 29.17% of the respondents who selected only discontinuous change. On the bases of how changes come about, by a score of 61.67%, the respondents believe the change was both planned and emergent. Again, 27.50 % of the respondents also believe the change was only planned.

**Table-2.** Respondent’s Perception on the Types of Change Based on Occurrence and How it Comes

Employees Perception of type of change based on occurrence				Employees Perception of type of change based on how it comes		
	Freq.	Percent		Freq	Percent	
Discontinuous Change	35	29.17	Planned Change	33	27.50	
Incremental Change	20	16.67	Emergent Change	12	10.00	
Discontinuous & Incremental Change	65	54.17	Contingency Change	1	0.83	
Total	120	100	Planned & Emergent Change	74	61.67	
			Total	120	100	

Source: Field Survey, January 2012 to May 2012

A five point Likert scale to examine how strongly respondents agree or disagree with statements on organizations management of change is analyzed in table 3 below. The result indicates that respondents agreed that there was clear vision and strategies concerning the introduction of change by a score of 77%.

This is very important because a change must be associated with vision and innovative strategy for the implementation of the change. As to whether there was regular and reliable flow of information concerning the changes, 75.7% agreed. Significantly, they also agreed management avail them the opportunity to participate in the change process by a score of 75.7%.

Linking reward, recognition and encouragement to change management, respondents agree by a score of 67.6% that they were rewarded, recognized and encourage for their contribution in making change happen. Additionally, respondents agree by a score of 55% that management has provided the maximum support during the change process.

The results further showed by a score of 68.9% that management shows example how they expect employees to behave after change. Furthermore by a score of 62.2%, respondents indicate management was open and honest about the future of the organization.

Regarding individual capability and competency level respondents agrees that was available within the organization before change by a score of 62.1%. According to the study, by a score of 81.1%, respondents agreed that there was enough commitment from employees towards the change process and communication system was also efficient.

On the negative side, by a score of 45.9% and 24.3% respondents remain neutral and disagreed respectively concerning their involvement in decision making and 35.1% and 20.3% of respondents remain neutral and disagreed respectively that they were comfortable with

management decision. Finally, on staff development and growth, majority of the respondent's remains divided by the score of 47.2% respectively for neutral and agreed.

**Table-3.** Employees' Perceptions on Management of Change

Questions	Responses In Percentage				
	SD	D	N	A	SA
Clear vision and direction for change.	3.0	3.0	17.0	43.0	34.0
Reliable and regular flow of information about changes taking place in the business.	0.0	2.7	21.6	55.4	20.3
Opportunity to participate in change process	0.0	2.7	21.6	55.4	20.3
Rewarded, recognized and encouragement for their contribution in making change happen	0.0	16.2	16.2	56.8	10.8
Maximum support for employees during change process	3.0	12.0	30.0	47.0	8.0
Involved in decision making	5.4	18.9	45.9	24.3	5.4
Comfortability with management decision	2.7	20.3	35.1	39.2	2.7
Management show example how they expect employees to behave	0.0	4.1	27.0	58.1	10.8
Management openness and honest about the future of the company	0.0	12.2	25.7	54.1	8.1
Availability of individual competency and capability	0.0	12.2	25.7	54.1	8.1
Enough commitment from employees	0.0	2.7	16.2	70.3	10.8
Efficient communication system within the organization.	0.0	2.7	16.2	52.7	28.4
Opportunity for staff growth and development was well laid out.	2.8	2.8	47.2	44.4	2.8

**Source:** Field Survey, January 2012 to May 2012

**SD**– Strongly Disagree, **A** – Agree, **N**– Neutral, **A**- Agree and **SA** – Strongly Agree.

Table 4 below takes a look at respondents view on significance of change on work process and activities. Any change process that takes place within an organization should have positive impact on the businesses of the organization.

It is anticipated to increase the growth of the organization by improving work processes and activities. It is significant to note that majority of the respondents were of the view that the change introduce has led to the improvement of work processes and activities.

Areas of improvement and their score includes the following: coping with workloads (50%); efficient organization and handling of activities (66.2%); elimination of unnecessary work activities (64%); improvement in team work (86.5%); effective time management (66.2%); increase in employee motivation (64.9%); improvement in good training programs for staffs (70.3%); desire to successfully complete and meet deadline (67.5%); improvement in the expertise in the company (79.7%) and better access to resources (71.6%).

However, majority of the respondents disagreed by a score of 51.9% that there is no pressure to work within the organization.

**Table-4.** Significances of Change on Work Process and Activities

Questions	Responses In Percentage				
	SD	D	N	A	SA
Employees coping with workloads	2.7	8.1	39.2	44.6	5.4
Activities are efficiently organized and handled in the organization	0.0	2.7	31.1	55.4	10.8
Elimination of unnecessary work activities	0.0	4.0	32.0	42.0	22.0
Improvement in team work in the company	2.7	5.4	5.4	51.4	35.1
Effective time management system	4.1	6.8	23.0	55.4	10.8
Increase in employee's motivation	2.7	5.4	27.0	51.4	13.5
Employees work with little or no pressure	9.5	42.4	31.9	16.2	0.0
Staff benefit from good training programs	2.7	5.4	21.6	59.5	10.8
Desire to complete successfully and meets deadlines	0.0	2.7	29.7	43.2	24.3
Expertise in the company has improved significantly	2.7	2.7	14.9	63.5	16.2
Access to resource to better work	2.7	0.0	25.7	58.1	13.5

Source: Field Survey, January 2012 to May 2012

SD- Strongly Disagree, A – Agree, N- Neutral, A- Agree and SA – Strongly Agree.

**Table-5.** Overall Assessment of Impact of Change Management within the Organization

Rating	Frequency	Percentage
Improved	87	72.50
Does not improve	10	8.33
Neutral	23	19.17
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey, January 2012 to May 2012

Table 5 above evaluates the overall impact of change management type and style used within the organization by the new management. By a score of 72.50%, the respondents rated the impact the style and type of techniques used has improved the organization performance.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Change is an ever present phenomenon within every organization and it is an indisputable fact that fruitful change management required high level deftness. However, for most organizations, managing change is mostly reactive resulting in high failure rate.

It has been argued that this is as a result of the neglect by organizations in adopting a well-tested procedures and approaches that have been recognized by academics for effective organizational change management. This study set out to investigate how change management was achieved within Vodafone PLC Ghana and explore its effect on work outcome and processes.

For the type of change that is implemented, the study reveals that, management adopted discontinuous and incremental change in the case of how change occurs and planned and emergent change in the case of how it came by. Perhaps the success of the change management in Vodafone PLC Ghana may be due to the adoption of combinations of both styles in each case.

As Burnes (2004) put it planned change provides a highly applicable model for change situation. Furthermore, the emergent change management provides the organization opportunity to adapt to the changing environment, circumstances and conditions and also a process of learning which further help in developing the capacity of the organization (Dawson, 1994; Altman and Iles, 1998).

Finally it can be seen that the change management that took place was well planned this is evidence in clear strategy and vision accompanying the introduction.

Furthermore, the study concludes that there was a strong positive impact of the change management on work processes and activities and this has led to improvement in the performance of employees.

The findings revealed that, overall the organization managed its change process successfully and this was due to adherence to suggestions proposed in the literature by several authors (Armenakis *et al.*, 1993; Schalk *et al.*, 1998; VanYperen *et al.*, 1998; Madsen *et al.*, 2005; Vakola and Nikolaou, 2005; Devos *et al.*, 2007).

But contrary to the literature the results exposed a major weakness in the areas of employee involvement in decision making and well planned staff growth and development scheme.

This study provides a descriptive insight on change management in one of the leading telecommunication industries in Ghana.

It is worthy to note that the entire organization was the focused; hence further research should be carried out to monitor and evaluate the impact the change on the specific units to determine their impacts respectively.

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