

# Human Resources Management In Context

**Lecture Title :-  
HRM and Organisational Change**

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**Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2026**



**Masters in  
Human Resources Management**

# Learning Objectives

- Critically assess HRM's strategic role in planning and implementing organizational change
- Analyze prominent change management concepts and frameworks and apply them to real-world HR issues.
- Identify common sources of resistance to change and evaluate HR initiatives to address them
- Create tactics for engaging and supporting employees during a transformational change

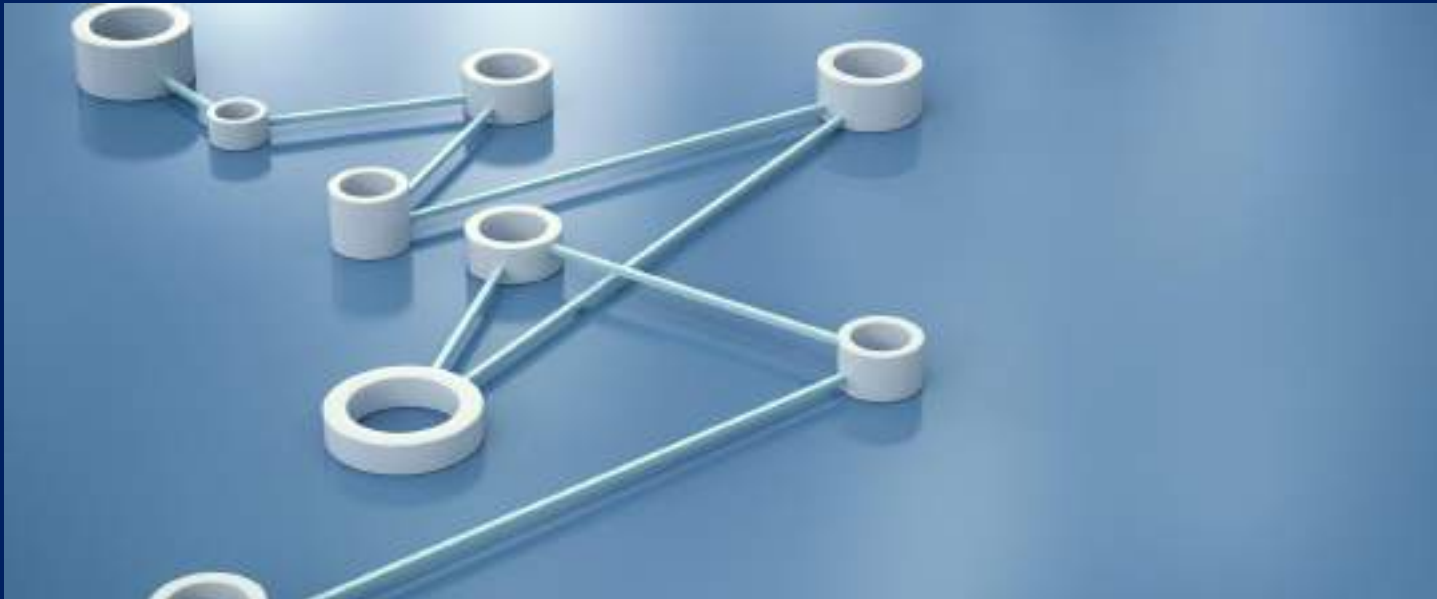


# Group discussion

- What is the biggest workplace change you've experienced and how did HR respond?
- What kind of drastic changes can an organisation go through?



Organisational change refers to the process by which companies alter key components of their **structure, strategy, operational methods, technologies, or culture** to adapt to internal and external pressures. It involves **planned or unplanned** transitions that aim to improve effectiveness, competitiveness, or sustainability (Burnes, 2017).



# The Strategic Role of HR in Organisational Change

During Organisational Change HR should take a strategic role by:-

- Aligning people strategy with business goals
- Design and facilitate organizational development, culture shifts and leadership transformation
- Have strategic foresight by anticipating workforce implications of trends like globalization, automation, and regulatory changes.
- Integrating with business strategy by taking part in planning stages vs just executing after decisions are taken
- Taking on a driver role instead of a reactive role



# The Strategic Role of HR in Organisational Change

Ulrich is a key contributor in positioning HR as a strategic partner. Ulrich's HR Strategic Partner Model positions HR as a key player in driving organizational success by aligning HR practices with business strategy. It emphasizes four roles for HR shifting HR from a support function to a strategic contributor.

"HR should not be defined by what it does, but by what it delivers." (Ulrich, 1997, p. 4)

| HR Role               | Function                                                                      |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Strategic Partner     | Aligns HR strategies with business objectives; supports long-term planning.   |
| Change Agent          | Leads and manages organisational transformation and cultural change.          |
| Administrative Expert | Streamlines HR processes; ensures operational efficiency and compliance.      |
| Employee Champion     | Advocates for employee needs; fosters engagement, wellbeing, and development. |

# Group discussion

- Which one of Ulrich's role / roles do you think are more dominant in general in organisations?
- Why?



# Ulrich's Dominant and Underrepresented Roles

| HR Role (Ulrich Model) | Status in Practice | Why?                                                                           |
|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Administrative Expert  | ✓ Dominant         | Focus on efficiency, compliance, and process; measurable outcomes valued.      |
| Employee Champion      | ✓ Dominant         | Regular involvement in employee relations, wellbeing, and conflict resolution. |
| Strategic Partner      | ✗ Underrepresented | Limited influence at executive level; often excluded from strategy formation.  |
| Change Agent           | ✗ Underrepresented | Change often led by consultants or operations; HR lacks perceived authority.   |

# HR's Role in Shaping vs Reacting

- **Proactive HR:** Drives cultural change, designs future-fit talent strategies, anticipates reskilling needs.

- **Reactive HR:** Often stuck managing redundancy processes, compliance, or employee relations post-change.

Often times HR is not involved at initial strategic planning stages. This leads to misalignment between people outcomes and strategic goals.



# Different Types of Organisational Change

| Type of Change          | Brief Description                                                                   |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Strategic Change        | Changes to long-term goals, mission, or business direction.                         |
| Structural Change       | Modifications to organisational hierarchy, reporting lines, or team configurations. |
| Operational Change      | Improvements or shifts in daily processes, workflows, or procedures.                |
| Technological Change    | Introduction or upgrade of systems and digital tools that affect operations.        |
| Cultural Change         | Shifts in organisational values, behaviours, or workplace norms.                    |
| Transformational Change | Deep, organisation-wide change affecting strategy, systems, and culture.            |
| Personnel Change        | Changes involving staff, leadership, or workforce composition.                      |

# Internal and External Drivers of Organisational Change

| Internal Drivers                   | External Drivers                                |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Leadership changes or new vision   | Market competition                              |
| Poor organisational performance    | Technological advancements                      |
| Cultural misalignment              | Regulatory or legal changes                     |
| Workforce demographics/skills gap  | Shifting customer expectations                  |
| Innovation and digital initiatives | Economic conditions (e.g. inflation, recession) |
| Restructuring or mergers           | Globalisation and geopolitical influences       |

# Group discussion

**FACT – 70% of change projects fail!!**

Why do you think some organisational change initiatives fail, even when the business case is strong?



# Barriers to Effective Organisational Change

- Resistance to change from employees / leaders
- Insufficient resources allocated to change process
- Employee distractions leading to decline in productivity
- No change in work style even though there are changes in organisation chart
- Lack of clarity of purpose





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# Change Management Frameworks

## Top 5 Change Management Models



**Kotter's  
model**



**McKinsey's  
7 S model**



**ADKAR  
model**

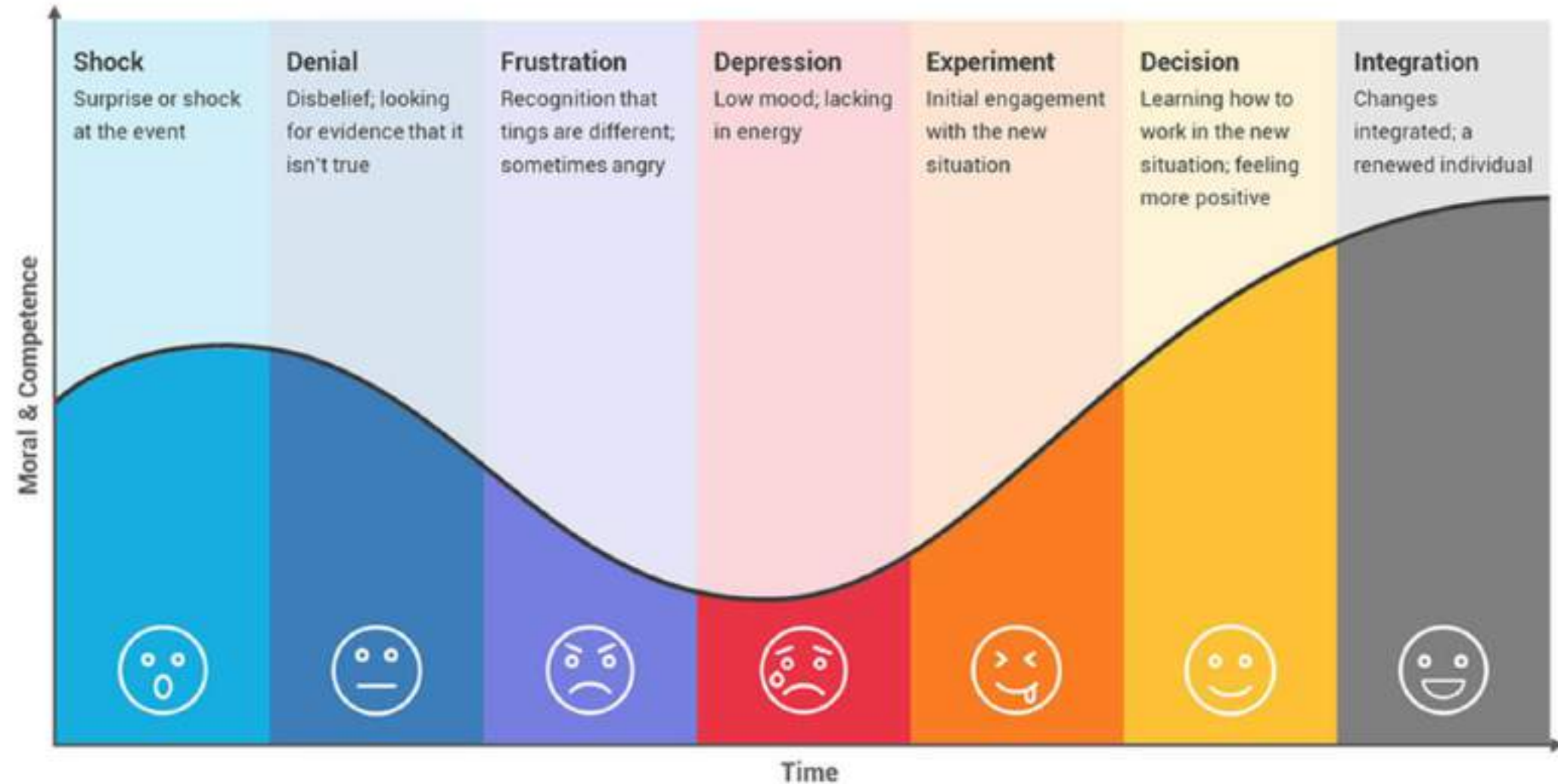


**Kübler-  
Ross  
model**



**Lewin's  
model**

# Kübler-Ross Change Curve Model



# HR Response to Kubler-Ross' Change Stages

| Stage       | Typical Employee Response | Suggested HR Action |
|-------------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Shock       | Surprise, confusion       |                     |
| Denial      | Refusal to accept reality |                     |
| Frustration | Anger, blame, resistance  |                     |
| Depression  | Withdrawal, low morale    |                     |
| Experiment  | Trying new behaviours     |                     |
| Decision    | Commitment to change      |                     |
| Integration | Embedding new behaviours  |                     |

# HR Response to Kubler-Ross' Change Stages

| Stage       | Typical Employee Response | Suggested HR Action                                     |
|-------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Shock       | Surprise, confusion       | Communicate clearly and calmly about the change         |
| Denial      | Refusal to accept reality | Share facts, hold Q&A sessions, involve direct managers |
| Frustration | Anger, blame, resistance  | Offer emotional support, listen empathetically          |
| Depression  | Withdrawal, low morale    | Provide counselling services, reinforce purpose         |
| Experiment  | Trying new behaviours     | Encourage participation in pilots or training           |
| Decision    | Commitment to change      | Recognise progress, set achievable goals                |
| Integration | Embedding new behaviours  | Align performance systems and celebrate success         |

# Lewin's Change Process

Psychologist Kurt Lewin developed a model that summarizes the fundamental steps involved in bringing about a change with little opposition. Lewin believed that two types of forces—**those attempting to preserve the status quo** and **those promoting change**—were responsible for all organizational behavior. Therefore, putting change into action entails either strengthening the forces for change or weakening those maintaining the status quo.

Lewin proposes the following three-step process to facilitate change :

- **Unfreezing**
- **Moving**
- **Refreezing**



# Lewin's Change Process

| Stage           | Description                                                                         | Example                                                       | HR Activities                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Unfreeze</b> | Prepare the organisation to accept change by breaking down the existing status quo. | Announcing a shift to a hybrid work model after COVID-19.     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communicate rationale for change</li> <li>- Engage stakeholders</li> <li>- Assess readiness</li> </ul>         |
| <b>Change</b>   | Execute the change—new behaviors, processes, or structures are introduced.          | Launching new digital tools for remote collaboration.         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Deliver training and support</li> <li>- Provide ongoing communication</li> <li>- Encourage feedback</li> </ul> |
| <b>Refreeze</b> | Stabilize the organisation after change to ensure it sticks and becomes routine.    | Embedding hybrid work into policy and performance management. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reinforce new behaviors</li> <li>- Update policies</li> <li>- Recognise and reward adoption</li> </ul>         |

# Kotter's 8-Step Change Model

In his book “Leading Change”, John P. Kotter presented an 8-Step Change Model. By emphasizing the leadership and human aspects of change, the model offers an organized framework for managing an organization's transformation.

It places a major emphasis on establishing **urgency**, **forming powerful leadership alliances**, and **ingraining new behaviors into the culture**. The concept is frequently used to direct change initiatives, particularly significant or transformative change, in HR and corporate environments.



# Kotter's 8-Step Change Model and Application

| Step                                       | HR Application                                                                                                    |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Create a Sense of Urgency               | - Share data on performance gaps or external threats - Communicate the cost of inaction                           |
| 2. Build a Guiding Coalition               | - Identify and develop influential leaders and change champions - Foster cross-functional teams                   |
| 3. Form a Strategic Vision and Initiatives | - Align people strategy with business goals - Help articulate the 'people side' of the vision                     |
| 4. Communicate the Vision                  | - Lead transparent, consistent messaging across channels - Use storytelling and dialogue                          |
| 5. Empower Broad-Based Action              | - Remove barriers (e.g., rigid policies) - Provide training and resources - Encourage innovation                  |
| 6. Generate Short-Term Wins                | - Set achievable milestones - Recognise early adopters and team success publicly                                  |
| 7. Sustain Acceleration                    | - Support continuous learning - Update development plans and performance measures                                 |
| 8. Institute Change                        | - Embed new values into recruitment, onboarding, and appraisal - Adjust policies and structures to support change |

# McKinsey 7S Model

The McKinsey 7S Model was developed in the early 1980s by consultants Tom Peters, Robert Waterman, and colleagues at McKinsey & Company.

It is a strategic planning and diagnostic tool made to make sure that every component of an organization is in sync and functioning as a unit, especially during times of organizational change and transformation.

**All 7 elements are interconnected.** A change in one (e.g., strategy) requires realignment of the others for successful implementation.



# McKinsey 7S Model

| Element Type  | 7S Element    | Description                                                                            |
|---------------|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hard Elements | Strategy      | The organization's plan to build competitive advantage and achieve long-term goals.    |
|               | Structure     | The organizational hierarchy, reporting lines, roles, and responsibilities.            |
|               | Systems       | Day-to-day processes, procedures, and workflows that drive the organization.           |
| Soft Elements | Shared Values | The core beliefs, norms, and culture that guide employee behavior and decision-making. |
|               | Skills        | The capabilities and competencies present within the organization.                     |
|               | Style         | The leadership style and management approach used by top executives and teams.         |
|               | Staff         | The organization's workforce composition, development, and talent management.          |



# Applying the McKinsey 7S Model

Using the McKinsey 7S framework will:

- Help **identify** misalignments during change (e.g., new strategy but outdated systems)
- **Support** organisational diagnosis before restructuring or transformation.

**HR can use the model to:**

- Align skills and staffing with strategic goals.
- Promote cultural change through shared values and leadership style.
- Ensure systems (e.g. performance management) support desired behaviours.



# ADKAR MODEL

The ADKAR Model is a goal-oriented change management framework developed by Prosci founder Jeff Hiatt in 2003. It focuses on guiding individuals through the change process, recognising that **organisational change only succeeds when people change.**

| ADKAR Stage       | Description                                                 | HR Application                                                                                                                                                    |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A – Awareness     | Understanding the need for change                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Communicate the “why” through clear, transparent messaging</li><li>- Address concerns early</li></ul>                     |
| D – Desire        | Willingness to support and engage in the change             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Engage influencers</li><li>- Align change with employee values and motivations</li><li>- Offer incentives</li></ul>       |
| K – Knowledge     | Knowing how to change (skills, behaviors, processes)        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Deliver targeted training and education</li><li>- Provide job aids and resources</li></ul>                                |
| A – Ability       | Having the capability to implement the change in daily work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Offer coaching and hands-on support</li><li>- Create safe spaces for practice and feedback</li></ul>                      |
| R – Reinforcement | Sustaining the change over time                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Recognise and reward success</li><li>- Monitor performance</li><li>- Integrate change into policies and culture</li></ul> |

# Using ADKAR in HR & Change Management

The effective use of this model will:

- Break change into actionable steps at the individual level**
- Help HR professionals identify gaps in change readiness**
- Encourages a people-centric approach to implementing new policies, systems, or strategies.**
- Supports smoother transitions in digital transformation, culture change, mergers, etc.**

ADKAR works sequentially— Every step must be achieved for the change to succeed. For example, one cannot expect ability without first ensuring knowledge.



# Group Exercise

**Split in 3 groups**

**Each group will tackle 1 case study**

- **Choose one change management model (e.g., Lewin's, Kotter's, ADKAR or McKinsey) and apply the model to your case study.**
- **Highlight key steps that are relevant to HR's role.**



## Case Study 1: Gaming Industry – Agile Transformation Company:

- PixelForge Studios, a mid-size game development company, is shifting from a traditional development cycle to an Agile methodology to improve speed-to-market and collaboration. Designers and programmers struggle to adjust, citing unclear roles and overwhelming stand-up meetings.
- Challenge: How can HR strategically support behavioural and cultural change while upskilling staff for Agile processes?

## Case Study 2: Aviation Maintenance – Safety Compliance Overhaul

- Company: AeroSecure Maintenance Services
- After a regulatory audit, AeroSecure must implement a new safety compliance framework, including process documentation, digital tracking systems, and revised maintenance protocols. Long-standing technicians feel micromanaged and disengaged.
- Challenge: What strategic steps should HR take to reinforce safety culture and support behavioural adaptation across all maintenance teams?

## Case Study 3: Pharmaceutical – Restructuring R&D Teams

- Company: Medisynth PharmaTo accelerate drug innovation
- Medisynth is restructuring its R&D department, merging early-phase and late-phase teams and introducing cross-functional leadership. Scientists are resistant, fearing loss of autonomy and research focus.
- Challenge: How can HR use strategic communication and change management to align people with the new structure and reduce silos?



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