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Exploration of Change Management Process in the Global Project

DOI: 10.15611/2025.44.3.12

JEL Classification: L1, O3

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Quote as: Łatoszyńska, A. (2025). Exploration of Change Management Process in the Global Project. In A. Witek-Crabb & J. Radomska (Eds.), *New Trends in Business Management. Strategy, Branding, Teamwork* (pp. 156-167). Publishing House of Wrocław University of Economics and Business.

Abstract: The article discusses the complexity of change management in a global company, focusing on e-procurement tool deployment. It analyses the challenges and drivers of change, emphasizing the supportive role of the leader as the most important in the process of successful implementation of the changes. In-depth interviews with business leaders revealed three categories of key factors of the implementation of e-procurement tool: people, technology, and process. The study provides practical guidelines for improving change management strategies in global projects.

Keywords: change management, business leaders interview, leadership role, e-procurement

1. Introduction

Organizations must adapt to technological development, market changes, and evolving customer expectations in today's dynamic business environment. This article explores change management within a global company, focusing on the implementation of the e-procurement tool. Various change management approaches, such as Kotter's eight-step model, Lewin's framework, and the ADKAR model, are examined, along with enablers and barriers to change.

Understanding the company's context, industry dynamics, and market positioning sets the stage for this exploration. The research process involved in-depth interviews (IDIs) and a robust research framework to uncover insights into the company's change management. The findings highlight the intricacies of change and provide actionable insights for the e-procurement deployment strategy, including best practices and pitfalls to avoid.

The research goal of this paper is exploration of change management process in the given company. The exploration will involve understanding how the company navigates and implements changes effectively, focusing on the role of business leaders and people managers in aligning with the company's future vision.

2. Key Enablers and Hindering Factors for Change

There is nothing permanent except change and many change initiatives fail. The crucial aspect of organizational change management lies in comprehending change drivers. By identifying them, organizations can effectively implement transformative initiatives and work toward achieving their strategic objectives. By understanding the enablers of change, organizations can better plan and execute change initiatives, overcome resistance, and increase the chances of success (Romford, 2023). Organizations often overlook the human element of change management. The employees' resistance to change, the internal power dynamics of the organization, and external factors are often overlooked and underestimated by the management. They take a top-down approach to managing change and ignore the inevitable resistance to imposing new ways of doing things (Clayton, 2021).

The top important change enablers are the following:

- supportive leadership: employees are more likely to embrace the change when leaders demonstrate commitment and provide clear direction;
- effective communication: transparent and timely communication is essential. leaders should articulate the reasons for change, address concerns, and keep everyone informed throughout the process;
- engaged employees: involving employees in the change process fosters ownership and commitment;
- training and skill development: equipping employees with the necessary skills and knowledge ensures a smoother transition;
- aligned incentives, such as performance metrics or rewards, with the desired change to encourage adoption. when employees see the benefits, they are more likely to embrace it;
- change champions: identifying and empowering change champions within the organization can create positive momentum. these individuals advocate for change and inspire others;
- organizational culture: a culture that values innovation, adaptability, and continuous improvement supports successful change efforts (Prosci, 2023).

When planning the change, it is essential to identify both the supportive and hindering factors to navigate the transition effectively. Hindering factors refer to elements or conditions that limit or impede the progress of a change. These factors can delay, interrupt, or create difficulties in implementing new initiatives or modifications. Here are some examples identified (Kotter et al., 2011):

- lack of ownership – basic parts of a venture are less likely to be completed if no one takes obligation for them;
- poor involvement from both the business leaders and people managers may impact the readiness and adoption of employees during the change programme;
- no buy-in from top managers/sponsors will decrease the credibility of a change programme;
- resistance to change – the enunciation of numerous irrational contentions for why the alternative will not work is one kind of resistance. The most minor acts of defiance can add up to big problems;
- lack of planning – efficiency misfortune, worker separation, steady loss, and resistance are quite a few of the awful results that can happen when alter is actualized without fitting arranging and thought of the effect on the workforce;
- bad change management communication – change management depends intensely on successful communication. Lacking communication strategies can cause superfluous delays, as the expecting beneficiary may not be the same as the beneficiary of the message;
- lack of clarity – the initiation of change projects often suffers from a lack of clarity in communicating the scope and objectives of the proposed transformation;
- lack or poor change governance – projects may go behind schedule without proper managerial oversight due to a lack of accountability among team members;
- change fatigue – encouraging employees to embrace change poses challenges, as they may perceive repeated requests to modify processes and practices while observing the leadership team and managers adhering to familiar routines (Kotter et al., 2011).

Change management is the systematic use of processes and tools to address the human aspects of transitioning from a current state to a desired future state. Its purpose is to ensure that the anticipated outcomes of the change and the expected return on investment are successfully realized. The change implementation is rooted in various perspectives (Hiatt & Creasey, 2003).

1. Emerging need for change – the basic principle of change management is that we change for a reason. The reasons for changes are as diverse as the changes themselves: increasing revenues, increasing customer satisfaction, reducing costs, improving the quality of the product or service, reducing the level of risk, improving quality of life, etc.
2. Collectivity vs. individuality – change only happens when individuals start working in a new way: exhibiting new behaviours, using new tools, acting according to new processes, and acquiring new values. Change comes from people adopting new skills and demonstrating new competencies.
3. Understanding the people-oriented aspect of change – change management ensures that every change in our organization will bring the expected results, so it influences employees and develops them through various activities such as communication, training, and active and visible leadership.

4. Desired outcomes of change – change management focuses on achieving desired results or outcomes change by managing people during the transformation process. The purpose is to increase the probability that the target change state will be completed and related outcomes will be achieved.

Change management's effectiveness relies on integrating organizational and individual change processes. Senior leaders, supervisors, managers, employees, and project team resources are key roles. Unlike project management, which a project manager leads, change management involves many organizational players, from executives to front-line supervisors.

3. Research Context

The surveyed company operates in over 70 countries with 50,000 employees across 156 production units. It is divided into several business units, each with its own management and activities. The board of directors oversees strategic direction, while the management team handles daily operations. Each business unit specializes in products and services, with functional areas like R&D, manufacturing, sales, marketing, and customer service. The Company plans to implement a new e-procurement solution to streamline procurement processes, enhance expense transparency, and improve supplier management. This global template is designed to simplify purchasing, strengthen compliance, and drive efficiency. The system will reduce costs by consolidating expenses with contracted suppliers, allowing for better negotiation terms and cost savings. It will standardize processes globally, improving coordination and simplifying operations. In summary, the influence of the e-procurement tool extends across the entire procurement ecosystem, from purchasers and approvers to suppliers and internal support teams. What is challenging for change management is that not only internal stakeholders need to be considered in communication, training, and hyper care, but also external partners – suppliers who need to use the tool to do business with The Company.

Change management resources in global projects should be well estimated, selected, and fitted to play one of the most critical roles in the project – as it relates to the human side. Change Manager is a role that can support the project manager in professionally and effectively managing 'people' risks. To put simply, it can be said that while the Project Manager prepares a solution for the organization (implements the project), the Change Manager prepares the organization to adopt this solution (Ogonowski & Kastrau, 2024).

Change management focuses on supporting employees through transitions from a current state to a future state, known as adoption. During transitions, employees need Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, and Reinforcement. These elements form the ADKAR Change Management Model by Prosci, which customizes strategies for each phase.

For change initiatives to be successful, leaders should be aligned on the vision and reasons for the change, understand what it will mean for the employees and the organization, and visibly champion the project. Leadership Alignment is key to effective communication and engagement. Active and visible Sponsorship is the No. 1 contributor to success. Business leaders are preferred senders of organizational messages as they play a key role in change outcomes because employees trust them, are close to where the change happens, and mitigate resistance. People Managers are preferred senders of personal impact messages – what’s in it for me? As presented in Fig. 1, the CEO/President and Executive Manager are preferred senders of organizational messages, while the Employee’s Supervisors are the ones who more preferably communicate personal messages.

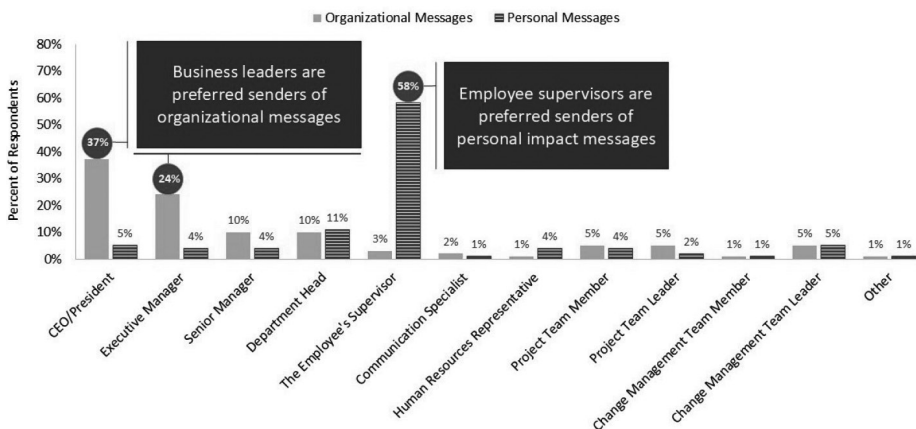


Fig. 1. The organizational and personal messages by different business roles

Source: (Prosci, 2023).

To get leadership buy-in and to elaborate a precise leadership engagement plan as part of the change management strategy, it is necessary to (McMahon, 2021):

- get to know the sponsors and their attitude towards the change,
- align messaging about e-procurement tool,
- know e-procurement deployment success definition,
- define who our allies are in the change process,
- expand the network of contacts.

4. Research Design

The aim of the research was to explore the change management process in The Company. The research involved understanding how the company navigates and implements changes effectively, but most of it, how the success of effective change looks like and what challenges the project team may encounter.

To accomplish these goals, the qualitative research method, In-Depth Interviews (IDI), was selected, as this research approach involves one-on-one engagements with participants. These interviews are used to gather an honest, intimate, and profound understanding of an audience or user behaviour in the context of a specific topic. The interviewees are business leaders and people managers. IDI is a relevant method as it allows for gathering detailed and in-depth participant feedback, especially when researching complex or nuanced topics. During the interview, new issues that arise during the conversation can be adapted and explored, allowing for deeper insight (*Choosing & Using Sources...*, 2018).

I identified 10 leaders as key stakeholders whose teams will be impacted by e-procurement tool deployment in the Asia-Pacific region. Their input is valuable for the project’s business and people readiness aspect. The structure of the interviewees is presented in Tab. 1.

Tabel 1. Structure IDI’s interviewees

Interviewee	Role description	No. of years in The company
Interviewee 1	finance lead for EMEA and APAC	10
Interviewee 2	manages procurement organization in APAC	3
Interviewee 3	manages data management organization	20
Interviewee 4	supply chain director for APAC region	20
Interviewee 5	manages account payable team for APAC	3
Interviewee 6	oversees procurement operations for Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore	3
Interviewee 7	oversees manufacturing operations in APAC	10
Interviewee 8	operation director for production sites in China	29
Interviewee 9	manages supply chain team for APAC business	15
Interviewee 10	optimizes supply chain efficiency in APAC region	9

Source: own elaboration.

I conducted the IDIs as virtual meetings via MS Teams from February 29th to April 30th, 2024. Each 30-minute interview was preceded by a personalized e-mail outlining the purpose and discussion prompts. Two out of 10 respondents declined the invites and provided written responses which were still included in the analysis. The other eight interviews were recorded and transcribed for documentation. Collected data were categorized and grouped to address the research question.

The research questions were as follows.

1. What is your image of e-pro?
2. From your perspective why e-procurement tool deployment is important to The Company?

3. What is needed to succeed with implementation of e-procurement?
4. What challenges during the change process, do you expect the team to encounter?
5. How do you see your role in driving that success?

5. Research Findings

My respondents, selected carefully for in-depth interviews, are all supporting businesses in the APAC region. Their seniority and experience are very different, from 3 to 29 years in The Company. Considering their roles, they deal with a wide range of diverse business areas. There are supply chain, operation, production, procurement, and accounts payable representatives. This set of informants was selected because all of them and their teams will be impacted by e-procurement deployment, and most of them need to be involved in supporting the change in the organization.

It was vital to learn about the benefits of implementing e-procurement tool from the business perspective and if the implementation fits with The Company's future vision. The analysis of the responses to this question reveals several key themes like standardization, productivity, and global consistency. Several responses highlight the significance of standardization. E-procurement serves as a tool to streamline and standardize processes across the organization. By doing so, it reduces manual labour and intervention in payment-related tasks. Interviewee 3 noted that the e-procurement tool is part of a global system that ensures consistency, completeness, and synchronization across various platforms. Most responses emphasize that e-procurement is integral to achieving operational excellence. It simplifies, standardizes, and automates processes, contributing to overall efficiency. Informant 4 said: "Simplification and modernization align nicely to APAC initiative; we are all for it." Providing a consistent procurement platform ensures that employees can focus on value-added tasks rather than manual administrative work. As confirmed by Informant 6: "I believe with e-procurement, we will be moving into a modernized and energized workplace." In summary, the deployment of e-procurement tool is viewed as an integral component of The Company's growth strategy, providing a unified platform for global procurement. It is also seen as a tool to streamline approval processes and manage attachments effectively within the organization.

It was essential to investigate the understanding of e-Procurement tool benefits for the entire organization. The feedback received reflects a blend of constructive criticism and optimism, with a clear desire for continued progress and enhancement of the e-procurement tool. Most interviewees have heard about e-procurement tool, some of them use it, and some individuals have no direct experience with it. The system is perceived as more efficient for contract management, although there are difficulties with e-bidding, especially in registering vendors for non-standardized categories due to complexity. Despite some obstacles, there has been progressive improvement in the experience with e-procurement since its inception. Generally, e-procurement tool is perceived as a comprehensive solution with high

expectations. Users are eager to understand the system better and anticipate improvements. As confirmed by Informant 7: "I heard a lot of people previously from the US or Europe. I'm not very sure about the issues, but I'm curious to know what their previous issues were. From a user perspective, we need to do anything to well prepare for that".

Secondly, I wanted to understand what are, according to my respondents, the key success factors of e-procurement tool implementation. The analysis of the responses highlights several critical factors for successful implementation, among them are understanding of local complexities, training and support, but also effective change management. Knowing what challenges the team may encounter during e-procurement deployment was also crucial. The analysis of the responses reveals three key areas of concern: people, processes, and technology.

Regarding people, language, and communication were mentioned several times. Providing training materials in local languages ensures that users understand e-procurement functionalities. Effective communication with other functions, especially finance, ensures alignment and collaboration. Effective change management strategies, including promoting the changes positively and providing resources in local languages, were underscored as essential for user readiness. Informant 10 emphasized: "We need to explain why we are having this platform using their own language so it is easier to follow what you're trying to tell them and what are the benefits of these tools. We need to have some promotion on this." Ensuring user readiness through training and support fosters a smooth transition. Vendor readiness could also be a struggle, as small and medium vendors, particularly from low-cost countries with less developed technology and suppliers' may express resistance to self-onboarding in the new tool. From all the responses, the key takeaways are that the deployment of e-procurement presents a multifaceted challenge that requires careful management of change, user training, data integration, and support systems to ensure a successful transition. Informant 9 paid attention to training: "To receive the good training, I think this is very, very critical. I don't see any big risk here."

Overall, the successful implementation of e-procurement tool requires a multifaceted approach that addresses local complexities, fosters open communication, provides robust training and support, and integrates seamlessly with existing systems.

Technology is understood as a transition from the current (manual) to the new (automated) way of working. One of the crucial elements, mentioned several times by my respondents, is transitioning from manual processes to e-procurement tool will necessitate extensive change management. As confirmed by Informant 1: "Now we are still pretty much relying on a lot of manual work. So that's gonna require a huge change management for the people to really start using and adopting e-procurement tool." An important message about business continuity was received from one interviewee, as ensuring uninterrupted business operations

while introducing new tools is a primary concern. Informant 10 mentioned: "People need to adjust to a new way of working. Of course, you will get challenged. Why? It is not as simple as what they're doing right now." Developing a backup plan is essential to prevent any disruptions that could lead to urgent delivery issues.

The third important category of challenges is Process. Most of my respondents emphasize that recognizing and adapting to each region's unique challenges and requirements is essential. This includes compliance with local government regulations and market practices. As confirmed by Informant 1: "It's important to understand clearly what the complexity is and then working with the team for a local resolution, and what challenges or what barriers we might face." Comprehensive training for users and responsive support, especially during the initial deployment phase, are crucial for a smooth transition. As mentioned by Informant 2: "People normally will be afraid or consent about any of the changes, so the responsiveness and the support after launch, especially for the beginning phase, is very critical."

Successful e-procurement deployment involves a holistic approach considering people, processes, technology, and integration. Addressing these challenges proactively can mitigate the risk of failure and lack of adoption.

It was pivotal to understand that among change management enablers and hindering factors, the most important group is connected with leaders' role. My respondents see their role in driving that success focusing on communication, collaboration, and support. Most individuals see their role as bridging local practices with global design, ensuring alignment and seamless support at regional and local levels. Emphasizing the importance of understanding what changes are being made and why they are necessary, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region where cultural factors play a significant role. Informant 1 pointed out: "I think the key is to make sure everyone fully understands what we are going to do and why we are doing this. Because in Asia Pacific, we typically need the leader to understand what the change is and why we are changing it." Many individuals aim to motivate and engage their teams by communicating the value of e-procurement and coordinating efforts across different functions and manufacturing plants. Informant 8 confirmed: "If I see the value here, then I can work with the team. Say: here's a value and how this will help all of us together. So, I can help with motivation, engagement, and communication." All the responses underscore the importance of three activities to drive the successful implementation of e-procurement tool: energize (active involvement in the deployment process), support (understanding the rationale behind changes and providing support), and communicate (clear communication of consistent and meaningful messages).

The in-depth interviews provided valuable insights, refined survey questions, and offered a holistic understanding of program dynamics. They helped me understand business leaders' preferences, needs, and experiences and expanded my network for future change management activities. The responses also clarified how leaders define project success, allowing me to align future communication effectively.

6. Conclusions

The paper focuses on leaders' attitudes and concerns regarding deploying the e-procurement tool. Based on the exploration research analysis, the key findings confirm the importance of change management in specific areas that should be applied in e-procurement deployment change management strategy to improve readiness and adoption of stakeholders. Here are the recommendations for an effective change management strategy focusing on Leadership engagement.

Visible leadership support is essential in successful change management, especially in global projects. One of the most important roles for leaders in the change process is communicating the need for change. Clear and compelling communication builds support and minimizes resistance. By explaining the reasons ("why?") for the change, managers help stakeholders understand the importance of adopting new ways of doing things. Effective business leaders inspire stakeholders by highlighting the positive impact the change will have on the organization, employees, customers, and other key stakeholders. A compelling vision motivates people to actively participate in the change process and become change agents or super users, creating desire. By promoting open dialogue and inclusivity, leaders create an environment where diverse perspectives are valued. Leaders also play a crucial role in overcoming resistance to change. Leaders reduce resistance by actively engaging with stakeholders, addressing doubts, and involving them in decision-making. Their commitment to the shift sets an example for others to follow.

Here are my key recommendations for engaging leadership in the e-procurement deployment project.

- **Identify Leaders:** identify all relevant business leaders who will be impacted by the change or whose teams will be impacted. Engaging them early in the process is better to ensure buy-in and alignment. During the interviews, it can also be identified who the allies are and determine if any coalition is built among leaders.
- **Buy-in:** clearly articulate the strategic value of e-procurement tool deployment. This includes explaining how it aligns with the organization's goals, improves user shopping experience, and enhances data quality. The best way is to present the business case, emphasizing cost savings, streamlined processes, and automated approval flow.
- **Messaging:** leaders should be aligned on the vision and reasons for the change, understand what it will mean for the employees and the organization, and visibly champion the project. The messages and actions of leaders throughout the organization must be aligned. Figure 2 shows examples of business leaders' engagement divided into three top important areas: Energize, Support, and Communicate.
- **Educate leaders:** business leaders are eager to learn more about e-procurement and be equipped with tools and knowledge to share with their employees. I re-

commend keeping leadership informed about project milestones, achievements, and challenges, regularly sharing progress reports, and metrics related to system usage and user satisfaction.

- Feedback: create feedback channels for employees to express their concerns, share feedback, and ask questions directly with leadership. Regular town hall meetings or virtual forums can facilitate open dialogue.
- Success stories: sharing success stories, highlighting positive outcomes, and recognizing teams or individuals who embrace the change would reinforce the idea that incremental progress matters.

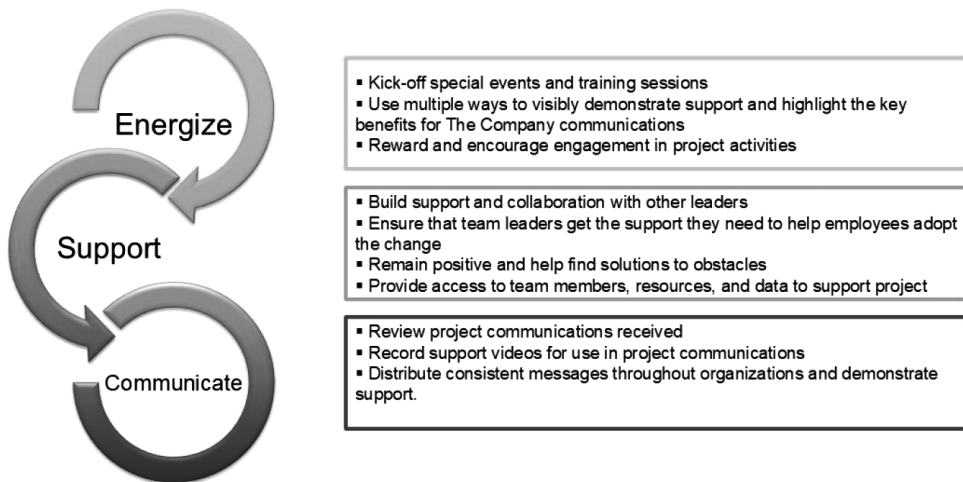


Fig. 2. Examples of business leaders' engagement

Source: own elaboration.

Research findings highlighted critical aspects of change management for The Company. Key recommendations for e-procurement deployment include fostering a collaborative environment, engaging stakeholders at all levels to ensure alignment and minimize resistance, and securing leadership support. Early involvement of leaders, addressing their concerns, and demonstrating the value of change are crucial for successful deployment.

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Eksploracja roli lidera w zarządzaniu zmianą w projekcie o zasięgu globalnym

Streszczenie: Artykuł omawia złożoność zarządzania zmianą w globalnej firmie, koncentrując się na wdrożeniu narzędzia *e-procurement*. Analizuje wyzwania i czynniki sprzyjające zmianie, podkreślając wspierającą rolę lidera jako najważniejszą w procesie udanego wdrożenia. Badanie, oparte na wywiadach z liderami biznesu, ujawnia 3 kategorie kluczowych czynników wdrażania narzędzi *e-procurement*: ludzi, technologię i proces. Dostarcza praktycznych wskazówek do strategii zarządzania zmianą w globalnych projektach.

Słowa kluczowe: zarządzanie zmianą, wywiady z liderami, role liderów, *e-procurement*