

# **The ingredients for choosing the right figurehead for increasing successful change in health care institutions**

Leoni Kruse

S0111066

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Universiteit Twente

Work and Organizational Psychology

First supervisor: Drs. Lysbeth van Silfhout

Second supervisor: Prof. Dr. Karin Sanders

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## **Samenvatting**

**Doel** – Een boegbeeld is de persoon of zijn de personen die in informatiebronnen wordt/worden geïntroduceerd als meest belangrijk voor het communiceren van verandering naar medewerkers. In dit onderzoek wordt onderzocht hoe de perceptie van medewerkers op de karakteristieken van het boegbeeld (geloofwaardig, aardig, betrouwbaarheid) bijdraagt aan een succesvolle verandering in termen van affectieve organisatie betrokkenheid, veranderbereidheid en een lage weerstand. Daarnaast wordt onderzocht of consensus tussen verschillende boegbeelden en onderscheidende en consistente veranderboodschappen een modererend effect hebben en de relatie versterken tussen boegbeeld karakteristieken en een succesvolle verandering.

**Opzet/methodologie/aanpak en bevindingen** – Een survey-onderzoek met data van 159 medewerkers in vier gezondheidsinstellingen laat zien dat de perceptie van medewerkers op de boegbeeld karakteristieken (geloofwaardigheid, aardig, betrouwbaar) positief gerelateerd is aan veranderbereidheid en negatief aan weerstand, maar daarentegen niet positief gerelateerd is aan affectieve organisatie betrokkenheid. Consensus tussen verschillende boegbeelden en consistente veranderboodschappen versterken de positieve relatie tussen boegbeeld karakteristieken en affectieve organisatie betrokkenheid en veranderbereidheid. Onderscheidende veranderboodschappen versterken de positieve relatie tussen boegbeeld karakteristieken en affectieve organisatie betrokkenheid.

**Onderzoek implicaties** – Introduceer een boegbeeld met de juiste karakteristieken (geloofwaardig, aardig, betrouwbaar). De voorkeur gaat uit naar het introduceren van één boegbeeld. Bij het introduceren van meer boegbeelden moet er gezorgd worden dat er consensus bestaat tussen de verschillende boegbeelden. Tenslotte, zorg ervoor dat het boegbeeld een onderscheidende en consistente boodschap communiceert.

## **Abstract**

**Purpose** - A figurehead is the person or persons presented and visualized in the information sources as the most important to communicate change to employees. This research elaborates how the employees' perception of figurehead characteristics (credibility, likeability and trustworthiness) contributes not only to successful change in terms of affective organization commitment but also to change readiness and lower change resistance. In addition, this research examines if consensus among different figureheads, distinctive and consistent change messages have a moderating effect and strengthen the relationship between figurehead's characteristics on successful change.

**Design/methodology/approach and findings** - A survey study with data of 159 employees within four health care institutions showed that the perception of the figurehead's characteristics is positively related to change readiness and negatively related to change resistance, but is not positively related to affective organization commitment. Consensus among different figureheads and consistent change messages strengthened the positive relationship between figurehead characteristics and affective organization commitment and change readiness. Distinctive change messages strengthened the positive relationship between figurehead characteristics and affective organization commitment.

**Research implications** – This study offers health care institutions recommendations to achieve successful change. First, choose a figurehead with the right characteristics (credibility, likeability and trustworthiness). Preferably introduce just only a single figurehead, by choosing more figureheads, ensure there is consensus among the different figureheads. Finally, ensure that this figurehead communicates a distinctive and consistent message to the employees.

## **Introduction**

Organizations are confronted with the complexity of economic, technological and regulatory changes, which have made adaptation and radical organizational change a central research issue (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). A key determinant of organizational survival and competitive advantage is the ability of organizations to cope with these contextual forces (D'Aveni, 1994). This also applies to the Dutch health care institutions, which have to choose for new policies, due to numerous inevitable reforms in government legislation and regulations for the Dutch public health system (Appendix A). For healthcare institutions to perform well in the future, these institutions have to adapt continuously to these new legislations and regulations and have to become more competitive. As a consequence employees have to adapt to new working conditions requiring a change in their attitude to work.

Acceptance of and support for organizational changes by the organization members is generally viewed as critical for the success of planned organizational changes (Herold, Fedor, & Caldwell, 2007), because employees play a major part in successful organizational change. For good management of the new direction, communication to the employees plays a major role in managing this change, because managing change is primarily a matter of communication (Lewis & Seibold, 1998). All behavior is in fact communication, because Watzlawick and Beavin (1967) stated that one cannot see and understand behaviour as action and reaction, but as part of a socially systemic transaction. Competent communication can be viewed as the strategic use of symbols to accomplish goals and which is essential in achieving desired employee behaviors (Eisenberg, 1984). Research has shown that in order to create efficient communication necessary to reduce any change resistance and to increase the organization's employee commitment it is of great importance which person communicates this change message (Larkin & Larkin, 1996). A figurehead is the person presented and visualized in information sources as most important person to communicate and present the change to employees. This figurehead is both crucial in creating an atmosphere for change and in supervising the change process, ensuring that the change will finally have success (Yukl, 2003).

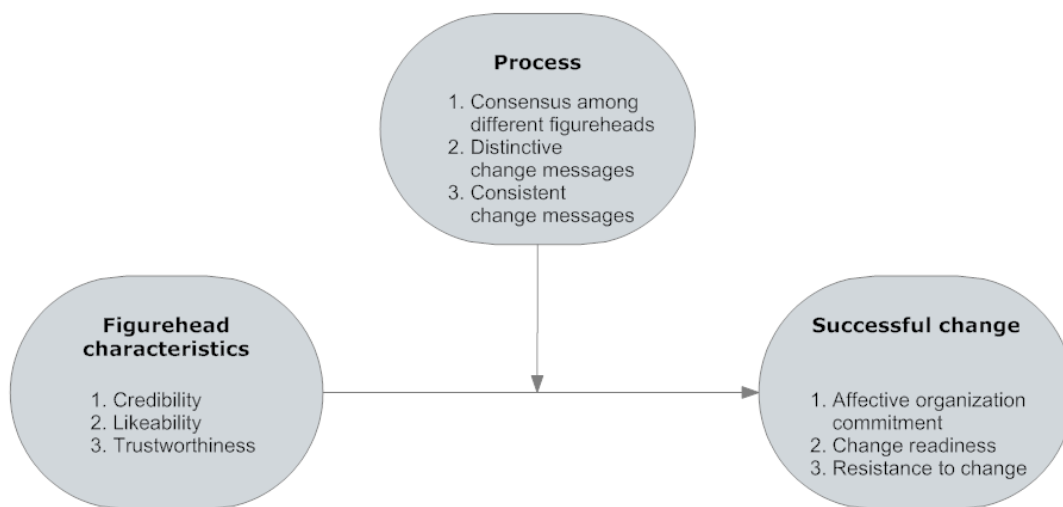
Employees' perception of the figurehead's characteristics seems to be important for a successful and ultimate change process. Roberts and O'Reilly (1974) demonstrated in the research field of leadership that when a leader is seen as untrustworthy this will lead to change resistance. Reichers, Wanous and Austin (1997) suggested that for enhancing success of change and minimizing cynicism about change a figurehead who is being liked and considered trustworthy, and credible should be central. Credibility, likeability and trustworthiness seems to be characteristics a figurehead should possess to achieve a successful change. Employees' perception of these figurehead's characteristics seems important for achieving a successful change and a theory that deals specifically with these employees' perception is the attribution theory. This theory attempts to clarify how people interpret behavior by making attributions (Heider, 1958). Employees can make attributions about cause-effect relationships, which depend on the degree of distinctiveness, consistency and consensus.

In this research, attention is paid to the key features of the attribution theory based on the article by Bowen and Ostroff (2004). Bowen and Ostroff (2004) assume that in case of a HRM system two interrelated features can be distinguished: content and process. They use 'content' in the sense of the practices and policies of an HRM system intended to achieve a particular objective (e.g. practices to promote employee outcomes). The process refers to how an HRM system can be designed and administered in an effective way by defining metafeatures of an overall HRM system. This HRM system can create powerful situations in the form of shared meaning about the content which might ultimately result into organizational performance. Bowen and Ostroff (2004) suggest that the content and process have to be effectively integrated. First, it is important to have your content straightened out. The process supports then subsequently, if properly integrated, the content for reaching the objective. The content in this research can be seen as the figurehead with the right characteristics (credible, likeable, trustworthiness) who is presented and visualized in the information sources. The content is then integrated by the process (i.e. consensus, distinctiveness, consistency) and a proper implementation of these constructs will support the content for reaching the objective (successful change). Consensus is in this study examined as employees' perception of different figureheads agreeing among themselves and sending the same message. An organization may choose to appoint one figurehead, but sometimes this is not possible or there is a preference to

appoint several figureheads. For enhancing consensus, it is important when introducing several figureheads that these figureheads are viewed by employees as strongly agreeing among themselves (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). Moreover, the attribution theory can be useful for the identification of those features that allow (change) messages to be received and uniformly interpreted by employees (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Kelley, 1967, 1973). For the purpose of this study, distinctiveness is to be interpreted as the relevance and comprehensibility of the change messages. Consistency refers to the consistency between the different change messages.

The process of how employees' perception of a figurehead characteristics contributes to a successful change is elaborated in this research. It is expected that when a figurehead possess certain characteristics, it will increase the success of change in terms of affective organization commitment, change readiness and change resistance. In addition, the connection between content (figurehead characteristics) and process (consensus among different figureheads, distinctive and consistent change messages) is described in this research. Consequently, the research question of this study is (Figure 1.1):

*RQ. What is the effect of employee perceptions' of a figurehead's characteristics and the messages sent by this figurehead on the success of organizational change?*



**Figure 1.1.** *Research model*

## **Theoretical Background**

### *Change success*

First: commitment and particularly affective organization commitment is the requisite employee behavior for successful change (Lippitt, 1997). There is evidence of this by identifying employees' affective organization commitment in a change context (Lippitt, 1997). Iverson (1996) suggest that affective organization commitment is to be considered one of the most important determinants for successful organizational change. Highly committed employees are more likely to develop a positive attitude towards organizational change and are thus more willing to invest energy in a change project (Iverson, 1996; Guest, 1987).

Employees' readiness for change is mentioned as the second major factor that contributes to a successful change (Lippitt, 1997). Change readiness comprises three aspects (Metselaar & Cozijnsen, 2002): a) someone wants to change (employees' attitude), b) the necessity to change (subjective norm) and c) the ability to change (employees' behavioral control). If all of the three aspects are met, the greatest probability of a successful change is the highest (Metselaar & Cozijnsen, 2002).

The third factor for successful change is the amount of resistance to change (Maurer, 1996). Employees' change resistance can be identified as a significant deterrent for an effective organization change (Cummings & Worley, 1997). Maurer (1996) found a direct link between change resistance and successful organizational change. It has shown that half to two-thirds of all major corporate change efforts fail due to this resistance. Change resistance is also negatively linked to job satisfaction and commitment to the organization and positively linked to employee turnover intentions (Oreg, 2006).

In summary, affective organization commitment, change readiness and resistance to change among employees can be seen as critical factors that contributing to a successful organizational change.

### *The figurehead's characteristics*

Specific figurehead characteristics would result into diverse effects on the change process and change success. Reichers, *et al.* (1997) suggest that a figurehead should at least

possess the attributes of credibility, likeability and trustworthiness to enhance change success.

The first figurehead characteristic is credibility. Credibility can be described as the perceived expertise and trustworthiness of the individual, communicating a persuasive message (Goldberg & Hartwick, 1990). Employees are more willing to move into the figureheads' direction when he/she is perceived as credible. Larkin and Larkin (1996) agree that employees will only change the way they go about their jobs when they learn what is expected from a familiar and credible source. Bowen and Ostroff (2004) suggest the same within the HRM perspective and suggest that it is most likely that the HRM system is perceived as an authority when the function of HRM is perceived as a highly credible one. When figureheads are perceived as credible by the employees, it can be beneficial to the organization because employee perception of credible leadership is for example linked to greater organizational commitment among employees (Kouzes & Posner, 1993a).

The second characteristic a figurehead should possess to achieve a more successful change is likeability. Figureheads who are announcing the change and who are generally well-liked will be found more believable, more trustworthy and are seen as more knowledgeable about the subject matter (Reichers, et al., 1997). They possess high power and status in the organization. Aaker (2004) states that a figurehead that is perceived as likeable will enhance the believability and persuasive power of a claim.

The figurehead's third characteristic is the concept trust. A person who is trusted is able to "influence the quality, level, content and directionality of communication" (Klauss & Bass, 1982). Levels of trust are significant indicators of communication effectiveness. Honesty, competence, authenticity and foresight are basic qualities for trust (Kouzes & Posner, 1987). Roberts and O'Reilly (1974) suggest that when employees do not perceive their leader as trustworthy, they are more likely to believe that the information is inaccurate, which can lead to any resistance to change (Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979). As suggested by Whitener (2001) and Hosmer (1994a), there is also a relationship between trust and employee commitment to the organization. In this line of reasoning the following hypothesis can be formulated:



- H1:** The perception of the figurehead's characteristics (credibility, likeability and trustworthiness) is positively related to high affective organization commitment (H1a), change readiness (H1b) and negatively related to resistance to change (H1c) by employees.

*Employees' perception of consensus among figureheads*

Organizations can choose between presenting and visualizing one figurehead or by presenting several figureheads, for example by appointing all line managers as figureheads. Organizations can introduce one figurehead, but sometimes this is not possible or desirable. When working with different figureheads, it is important that the different figureheads show consensus. Viewed from the HRM perspective of Bowen and Ostroff (2004), consensus arises when there is agreement among employees' views on the event-effect relationship - the intended targets of influence by the HRM system-. In this research, consensus is translated into consensus among employees and their perception of consensus among the different figureheads. The different figureheads have to agree about the content of the change messages. Kelley (1972) suggests that attributions, which are more accurate as to which consequences result from certain behavior and response, are more likely to be made when there is consensus. Bliese and Halverson (1998) suggested that groups which are characterized by high levels of consensus have members with shared perceptions of social reality. Good job performance and low levels of internal conflict and stress is presumed within these groups. When message senders are viewed by individuals as strongly agreeing among themselves on the message, it is more likely these individuals form consensus (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). Therefore, there should be consensus between the different figureheads that are sending messages because when different message senders are viewed by employees as high in consensus, it is more likely that the employees form agreement and that they all assess the change messages on the same and correctly manner. In addition, it is assumed by Bowen and Ostroff (2004) that this perception of agreement is related to distinctiveness and consistency in terms of interaction, because for example the distinctiveness of a message can be enhanced when there is agreement among multiple decision makers (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). For example within Human Resource, when managers at the

top disagree about the goals of HRM, it becomes difficult to send unambiguous and internally consistent messages to the employees (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). Within this view, managers at the top should have a clear vision about the change process and goals, enabling the different figureheads to send unambiguous and internally consistent change messages to employees.

It is assumed by Bowen and Ostroff (2004) that the content and process must be effectively integrated to actually reach a particular objective. In this research, the content is embodied in a figurehead because of his/her appropriate characteristics (credibility, likeability and trustworthiness) while consensus among different figureheads applies to the process side.

First, it is important to have the content clearly met across by introducing a figurehead with the right characteristics, who can accomplish for example desired employee behavior.

Second, by ensuring consensus among the different figureheads (the process), the content effect on the objective (i.e. successful change) will be strengthened. It is expected that the witnessing of figurehead consensus strengthen the positive relation between certain figurehead characteristics and successful change. With this line of reasoning the second hypothesis can be formulated:

**H2:** The employees' perception of consensus among different figureheads strengthens the positive relationship between the figurehead's characteristics (credibility, likeability and trustworthiness) and high affective organization commitment (H2a) and change readiness (H2b) and strengthens negative relationship between figurehead's characteristics and resistance to change (H2c).

*Distinctiveness of the change message: understandability and relevance*

Distinctiveness of the messages can be divided into four elements: Visibility, understandability, legitimacy of authority, and relevance. In this research understandability and relevance is only taken in account.

It is necessary that employees understand the change messages, as Bowen and Ostroff (2004) stated that communication in an organization that cannot be understood when it does not have any authority. It is likely that people use different cognitive categories to attend the different aspects of the given information, which results in different attributions (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). A clear and sensible message without ambiguities or messages that quickly clarify ambiguities can help to overcome the resistance to change (Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979). The change message must also have a clear sensible vision, because otherwise it can take the organization into the wrong direction (not towards the desired or planned goal) or no direction at all (Kotter, 1995).

The relevance of the messages refers to the question if a situation is defined in such a way that the situation is seen by individuals as relevant for an important goal (Kelman & Hamilton, 1989). The urgency to change should therefore be included, because the transformation process cannot be succeeded when the urgency rate is not emphasized enough (Kotter, 1995). Without a sense of urgency, the needed additional efforts will not be delivered by employees. Employees make choices concerning what is the most appealing to their needs, interests and goals. The change message must therefore address the key question 'what is in it for me'? (Kotter, 1996). In addition, Kotter (1995) assumed that for establishing the sense of urgency to change among employees, market and competitive realities must be examined. It is important to identify and discuss crises, potential crises or major opportunities. Moreover it is important to emphasize that the change is really important to employees, otherwise employees will resist the change. It is for example possible that people feel unpleasant and begin to resist this change, giving up certain aspects of their current (work) situation (Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979). However, it has been suggested that to overcome a resistance to change it does not always have to be emphasized to employees what's in it for them, but when organizations introduce a 'burning platform', an vision perspective, this will also help employees to overcome the change by employees (Delamothe & Smith, 2004).

As mentioned before, it is first important to have your content straightened out. This implies that a figurehead, who possesses the right characteristics, should be introduced for achieving goals, e.g. desired employee behavior.

Second, by ensuring that employees perceive the messages sent about the change as distinctive, the effect of the content on the objective (successful change) will be strengthened. From this line of reasoning the third hypothesis is formulated:

**H3:** When employees perceive the messages as distinctive, this strengthens the positive relationship between figurehead's characteristics (credibility, likeability and trustworthiness) and high affective organization commitment (H3a) and change readiness (H3b) and it also strengthens the negative relationship between figurehead's characteristics and resistance to change (H3c).

#### *Consistency in change messages*

Consistency is described by Bowen and Ostroff (2004) as a construct that generally refers to establishing an effect over time and modalities whereby each time the effect occurs when the entity is present, which is regardless of the form of the interactions. They focus on features that will establish a consistent relationship over time, people and context; for example consistency between messages sent by HRM. In this research, consistency is not formulated as the consistency between the messages sent by HRM, but as the perceived consistency by employees between the different sent messages about the organizational change.

When there is incongruent information in the different messages, consequences of inconsistency can be severe (Lidz, 1973). Inconsistency in messages may for example induce greater interpersonal distances and it can harm the assessed sincerity of the message sender (Graves & Robinson II, 1976). Bowen and Ostroff (2004) stated that different types of consistency are required and each of these consistency types entails the need to avoid sending double-bind communications to employees. One type of consistency is the internal consistency of the different change messages. Inconsistent messages produce weak situations (Kaarsemaker & Poutsma, 2006). In contrast, consistent messages will create strong situations.

Stability over time is another type of consistency. There is a propensity among people to accept messages that are close to their current understanding of situations, thus

messages that are more consistent over time will be internalized more easily by employees (Kaarsemaker & Poutsma, 2006).

To conclude, it is first important to have your content straightened out. This implies that a figurehead, who possesses the right characteristics, should be introduced for achieving goals, e.g. desired employee behavior.

Second, by ensuring that employees perceive the messages sent about the change as consistent the effect of the content on the objective (successful change) will be strengthened. Given the above-mentioned line of reasoning the fourth hypothesis is formulated:

- H4:** When employees perceive the different messages as consistent, this strengthens the positive relationship between figurehead's characteristics (credibility, likeability and trustworthiness) and high affective organization commitment (H4a) and change readiness (H4b) and it also strengthens the negative relationship between figurehead's characteristics and resistance to change (H4c).

## **Method**

### *Respondents*

Data from 159 employees working in four different health care institutions has been collected. In healthcare institution one, data are collected from 71 employees (24 percent response rate). In healthcare institution two, data are collected from 11 employees (14 percent response rate), in healthcare institution three, data are collected from 23 employees (12 percent response rate), and in healthcare institution four, data are collected from 54 employees (27 percent response rate). All four health care institutions have to change due to legislative changes imposed by the government; namely gaining a better competitive position for the future. Health care institutions one, two and three are faced with a merger. The fourth health care institution is dealing with a sustained internal change. The dataset included 118 (74 percent) female and 41 (26 percent) male employees. Thirty-six respondents fall within the age range of 20 – 30 years (23 percent), 48 fall within the age range of 30 – 40 years (30 percent), 35 fall within the age range of

41-50 years (22 percent) and 40 fall within the age range of 50 years and older (25 percent). Among the respondents 36 employees attended vocational education (23 percent), 102 higher vocational education (64 percent) and 21 University education (13 percent). 112 (70 percent) employees have the same manager before the change process.

### *Procedure*

The health care institutions where this research has been conducted, have all gone through a change, or were changing into a merger or reorganization at the time of this research. Respondents from the health care institutions have been approached by a contact person from the organization itself. The questionnaire was distributed digitally by means of a website within the health care institutions. The anonymity of the respondents is safeguarded. For this research, a questionnaire is used which consists of different measurement scales which will be further explained in the section instruments. The same questionnaire is sent to all of the four health care institutions employees.

### *Instruments*

The success of the change is measured using three constructs, namely affective organization commitment, change readiness, and resistance to change.

*Affective organization commitment* is measured by a scale designed by Meyer, Allen and Smith (1993). The affective organization commitment scale consists of four items with anchors 1 = totally disagree, to 5 = totally agree. Examples of affective commitment items include “I feel at home in this organization” and “I feel emotionally attached to this organization”. After deleting the item “I experience the problems of this organization as my own problems”, the scale proved reasonably reliable (Cronbach  $\alpha$  = 0.73).

*Change readiness* is measured by a scale developed by Metselaar and Cozijnsen (2002). The scale consists of four items with anchors 1 = totally disagree, to 5 = totally agree (Cronbach  $\alpha$  = 0.77). Examples of readiness for change items include “During the change I am willing to free up time for the introduction of the change”, and “During the change I am willing to convince my colleagues that this change process is useful”.

*Resistance to change* is measured by a scale developed by Oreg (2006) and measured the affective resistance, the cognitive resistance, and the resistance which is manifested in the behavior. The resistance to change scale consists of nine items with anchors 1 = totally disagree, to 5 = totally agree (Cronbach  $\alpha = 0.89$ ). Examples of these scale include “The change makes me upset”, and “ I protest against the change”.

The figurehead’s characteristics were measured by three constructs; namely the trustworthiness of the figurehead, the likeability and the credibility of the figurehead.

*Credibility of the figurehead* (Ihrke, 1996) has been measured on a five point scale and consists of eight items. measured by two different scales (Cronbach  $\alpha = 0.93$ ). Examples of the scale include “The person, who gave me information about the change, makes sure that I have sufficient power and authority to accomplish assigned objectives”.

*Likeability* (Larocca, 2003) of the figurehead was measured by four descriptors arranged on a five point semantic differential scale anchored by the following descriptors: critical/tolerant, considerate/inconsiderate, popular/unpopular, and likeable/not likeable. After deleting the item critical/tolerant, the scale has proved highly reliable (Cronbach  $\alpha = 0.82$ ).

*Trust in* (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, & Fetter, 1990) the figurehead has been measured on a five point scale and consists of four items (Cronbach  $\alpha = 0.89$ ). Examples of this scale include “I feel a strong loyalty to the person who informed me about the change”, and “I have full confidence in the integrity of the person who informed me about the change”.

*Consensus* (Delmotte, 2008) among the figureheads was measured by a four item scale anchoring 1 = totally disagree, to 5 = totally agree (Cronbach  $\alpha = 0.84$ ). Examples of the consensus scale include “The different persons who communicate the change, agreeing on the way the employees should be informed”, and “There is clear agreement of opinion among the people who communicate the change to the employees”.

*Distinctiveness* of the messages is measured by two different constructs, namely understandability and relevance. Relevance (Delmotte, 2008) was measured by a four item scale with anchors 1 = totally disagree, to 5 = totally agree. Examples of this scale include “The communication of the change is in line with my needs”, and “ I find much of the transmitted communication about the change useless” (R). Understandability (Delmotte, 2008) was measured by a five item scale with anchors 1 = totally disagree, to

5 = totally agree. The scales have been combined and have proved very reliable (Cronbach  $\alpha = 0.83$ ).

The *consistency* scale (Delmotte, 2008) consists of five items with anchors 1 = totally disagree, to 5 = totally agree (Cronbach  $\alpha = 0.82$ ). Examples of the consistency scale include “ In this organization the message about the change is changing every other minute” (R), and “ The successive communication statements about the change transmitted through the different communication channels, are contradictory” (R).

*Control variables.* To control employee characteristics, the following control variables are included: gender (1 = male; 2 = female), age (1 = > 20; 2 = 20-30; 3 = 31-40; 4 = 41-50; 5 = < 50), highest level of education (1 = primary education; 2 = secondary education; 3 = secondary vocational education; 4 = higher vocational education; 5 = University education), managerial position (1 = yes; 2 = no), contract size (1 = 0-10 hours a week; 2 = 11-20 hours a week; 3 = 21-30 hours a week; 4 = 31-40 hours a week), type of employment (1 = permanent contract; 2 = fixed-term contract; 3 = a worker on call; 4 = external), time working in current job (1 = < 1 year; 2 = 1-5 years; 3 = 6-10 years; 4 = 11-20 years; > 20 years), same manager as before the change (1 = yes; 2 = no). In addition, the position of the employees has been monitored. In each institution, a distinction for the different positions is made and the employees could indicate in which position they were in.

All employees have been asked to sum up all the persons from whom they have received information about the change. The employees have been asked to indicate who is seen by them as the most credible as well the most important source for communicating information about the change.

## **Results**

### *Descriptive statistics*

Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) for each health care institution are reported in Table 1. For some constructs significant effects were found in the averages between the four health care institutions. For resistance to change ( $F(3,158) = 12.36, p < 0.01$ ); figurehead characteristics ( $F(3,158) = 3.96, p < 0.01$ ); consensus among different figureheads ( $F(3,158) = 7.22, p < 0.01$ ) and consistency in change messages ( $F(3,158) =$



4.26,  $p < 0.01$ ), the found differences between the averages of the health care institutions were significant. The assessment of these constructs by employees vary per health care institution.

Employees regard their own frontline manager as most credible for receiving information about the change (59 percent), followed by higher management (19 percent) and location manager (11 percent), communication department (6 percent), others (4 percent) and another manager (1 percent). The employees consider their own manager as most important source for receiving information about the change (70 percent), the higher management (15 percent) or the location manager (9 percent) as the second important source, succeeded by the communication department (2 percent), others (2 percent), another manager (1 percent) and Human Resource Management (1 percent).

**Table 1.** Means and standard deviations for each health care institution

	Health care institution 1 (N=71)		Health care institution 2 (N=11)		Health care institution 3 (N=23)		Health care institution 4 (N=54)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
1.Affective commitment	3.87	0.56	3.82	0.85	3.78	0.64	4.13	0.67
2.Readiness for change	3.79	0.57	3.64	0.70	3.77	0.65	3.78	0.83
3.Resistance to change	1.84	0.52	2.27	1.10	2.42	0.83	2.64	0.88
4.Characteristics	3.70	0.67	3.10	0.76	3.73	0.77	3.40	0.85
5.Consensus	3.45	0.65	3.05	0.76	3.27	0.70	2.87	0.77
6.Distinctiveness	3.56	0.63	3.29	0.59	3.50	0.68	3.33	0.67
7.Consistency	3.59	0.74	3.58	0.65	3.58	0.83	3.13	0.77

### *Correlations*

Means, standard deviations and correlations between study variables, are reported in Table 2. A strong significant relationship appears between affective organization commitment and change readiness ( $r = 0.37$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) and between affective organization commitment and distinctiveness ( $r = 0.25$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). No significant relationship has been found between affective organization commitment and resistance to change ( $r = 0.10$ ;  $p = \text{n.s.}$ ), between affective organization commitment and figurehead characteristics ( $r = 0.11$ ;  $p = \text{n.s.}$ ), between affective organization commitment and

consensus among different figureheads ( $r = 0.05$ ;  $p = \text{n.s.}$ ) and between affective organization commitment and consistency ( $r = 0.12$ ;  $p = \text{n.s.}$ ).

A major significant relationship appears between change readiness and resistance to change ( $r = -0.34$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), between change readiness and figurehead characteristics ( $r = 0.26$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), between change readiness and distinctiveness ( $r = 0.51$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) and between change readiness and consistency ( $r = 0.24$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). A significant relationship appears between change readiness and consensus among different figureheads ( $r = 0.19$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

A major significant relationship appears between resistance to change and figurehead characteristics ( $r = -0.48$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), between resistance to change and consensus among different figureheads ( $r = -0.47$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), between resistance to change and distinctiveness ( $r = -0.50$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) and between resistance to change and consistency ( $r = -0.47$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ).

A major significant relationship appears between figurehead characteristics and consensus among different figureheads ( $r = 0.51$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), between figurehead characteristics and distinctiveness ( $r = 0.49$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) and between figurehead characteristics and consistency ( $r = 0.45$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ).

A major significant relationship also appears between consensus among different figureheads and distinctiveness ( $r = 0.55$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) and between consensus among different figureheads and consistency ( $r = 0.63$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ).

Finally there appears to be a strong significant relationship between distinctiveness and consistency ( $r = 0.63$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ).

**Table 2.** Means, standard deviations and correlations between study variables

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Affective commitment	3.94	0.64						
2. Readiness for change	3.78	0.68	0.37**					
3. Resistance to change	3.78	0.83	0.10	-0.34**				
4. Characteristics	3.95	0.83	0.11	0.26**	-0.49**			
5. Consensus	3.20	0.75	0.05	0.19*	-0.48**	0.51**		
6. Distinctiveness	3.45	0.65	0.25**	0.51**	-0.50**	0.49**	0.55**	
7. Consistency	3.43	0.78	0.12	0.24**	-0.47**	0.45**	0.65**	0.63**

**Note:** \* =  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* =  $p < 0.01$

### *Regression analysis*

In Model 1 (Table 3, 4 and 5) the control variables gender, age, managerial position and institution are added. The control variables highest level of education, type of employment, time working and same manager have been tested equally as before the change but no significant effects were found and therefore they have been ignored in the analysis. By means of a regression analysis the effect is measured of figurehead characteristics (credibility, likeability and trustworthiness) on the change success in terms of a high affective organization commitment (H1a), change readiness (H1b) and resistance to change (H1c). The employees' perception of the figurehead's characteristics does not have a significant effect on affective organization commitment to of the employees' ( $\beta = .11$ ;  $p = \text{n.s.}$ ). H1a can not be confirmed. The employees' perception of the figurehead's characteristics does have a significant effect on change readiness ( $\beta = .23$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Therefore H1b can be confirmed. Employees' perception of figurehead's characteristics does have a significant effect on change agreement ( $\beta = .41$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). H1c can therefore be confirmed as well. The results show that the effect of figurehead's characteristics on resistance to change varies significantly per healthcare institution. For example there is a stronger effect between figurehead characteristics and resistance to change in healthcare institution one in comparison to the others.

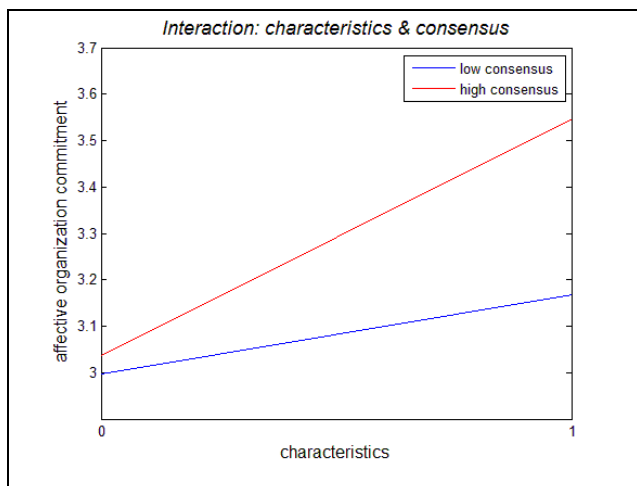
The employees' perception of consensus among different figureheads strengthened the positive relationship between figurehead characteristics (credibility, likeability and trustworthiness) and high affective organization commitment (H2a) and change readiness (H2b) and also strengthened the negative relationship between figurehead characteristics and resistance to change (H2c). Table 3 represents the results of regression analyses. The perception of consensus between different figureheads by employees does have significantly moderating effect on the positive relationship between figurehead characteristics and affective organization commitment ( $\beta = .34$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Therefore H2a can be confirmed (see Figure 1.2). The employees' perception of consensus among different figureheads does have a significantly moderating effect on the positive relationship between figurehead characteristics and change readiness ( $\beta = .21$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). H2b can be confirmed (see Figure 1.3). The employees' perception of consensus among different figureheads does not have a significant effect on the negative relationship between figurehead characteristics and resistance to change ( $\beta = .09$ ;  $p = \text{n.s.}$ ). So H2c

can not be confirmed. It may also be noted that the moderating effect of consensus among different figureheads on the positive relationship between figurehead characteristics and affective organization commitment varies per health care institution. The results show a greater effect for healthcare institution one in comparison to the others. .

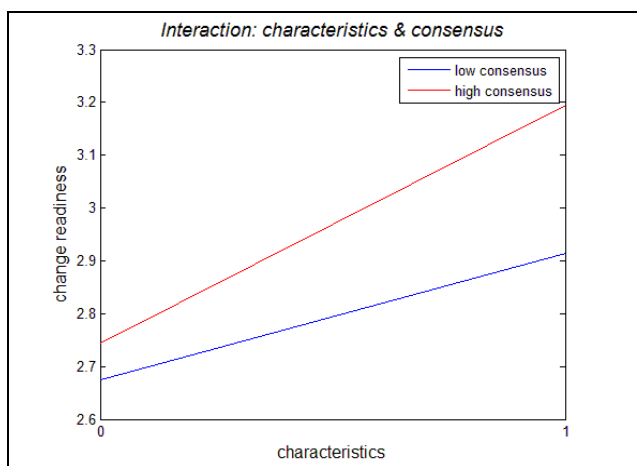
When employees perceive the change messages as distinctive, this strengthened the positive relationship between figurehead characteristics (credibility, likeability and trustworthiness) and high affective organization commitment (H3a) and change readiness (H3b) and also strengthened the negative relationship between figurehead characteristics and resistance to change (H3c). Table 4 represents the results of regression analyses. The perception of employees of distinctive messages have a significantly moderating effect on the positive relationship between the figurehead characteristics and affective organization commitment ( $\beta = .19$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). H3a can be confirmed (see Figure 1.4). Employees' perception of distinctive messages does not have a significant moderating effect on the positive relationship between figurehead characteristics and change readiness ( $\beta = .07$ ;  $p = \text{n.s.}$ ). H3b can therefore not be confirmed. The employees' perception of distinctive messages does have a significant moderating effect on the negative relationship between figurehead characteristics and resistance to change ( $\beta = .14$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). There is a significant positive relationship found instead of the expected negative relationship and therefore H3c can not be confirmed (see Figure 1.5). It should be noted that the moderating effect of the distinctive change messages perception on the positive relationship between figurehead characteristics and affective organization commitment varies per health care institution. The results show for example a greater effect for healthcare institution one in comparison to the others.

When employees perceive the different change messages sent as consistent, this strengthened the positive relationship between figurehead characteristics (credibility, likeability and trustworthiness) and high affective organization commitment (H4a) and change readiness (H4b) and strengthened the negative relationship between figurehead characteristics and resistance to change (H4c). Table 5 represents the results of regression analyses. The employees' perception of consistent change messages does have significantly moderating effect on the relationship between figurehead characteristics and the affective organization commitment ( $\beta = .24$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). H4a can therefore be confirmed (see Figure 1.6). The employees' perception of consistent change messages

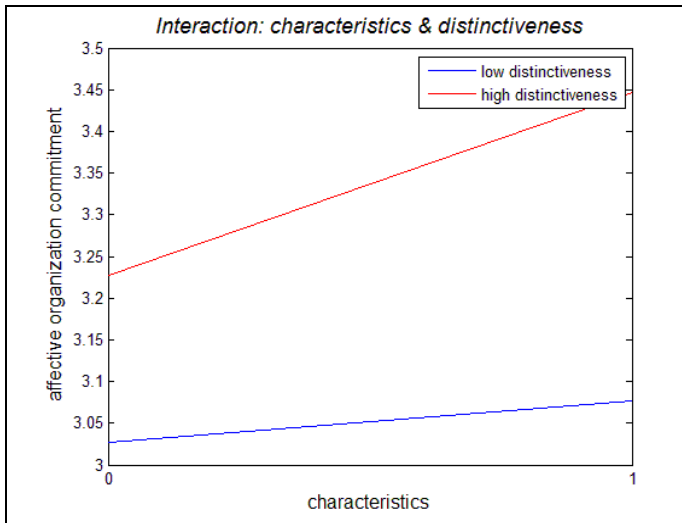
does have a significantly moderating effect on the relationship between figurehead characteristics and change readiness ( $\beta = .27$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). H4b can be confirmed (see Figure 1.7). Employees' perception of consistent change messages does not have a significantly moderating effect on the negative relationship between figurehead characteristics and resistance to change ( $\beta = .06$ ;  $p = \text{n.s.}$ ). H4c can therefore not be confirmed. It may also be noted that the moderating effect of the consistent change messages perception on the positive relationship between figurehead characteristics and affective organization commitment varies per health care institution. The results show for example a greater effect for healthcare institution one in comparison to the others.



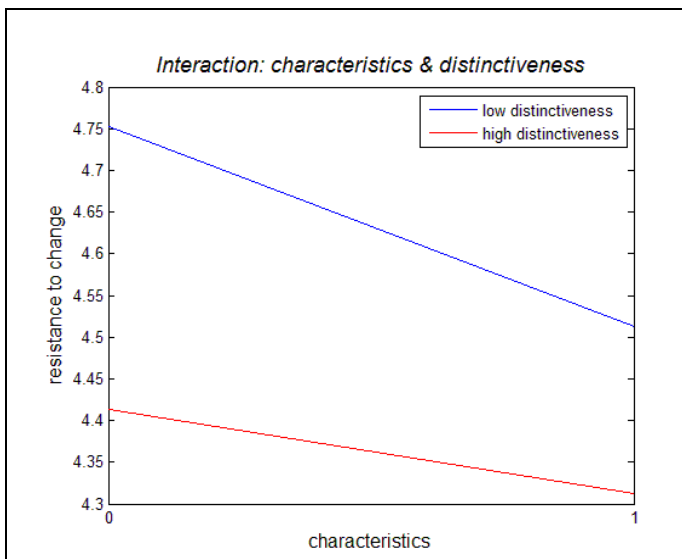
**Figure 1.2** Moderator effect of consensus among different figureheads on the positive relationship between figurehead characteristics and affective organization commitment



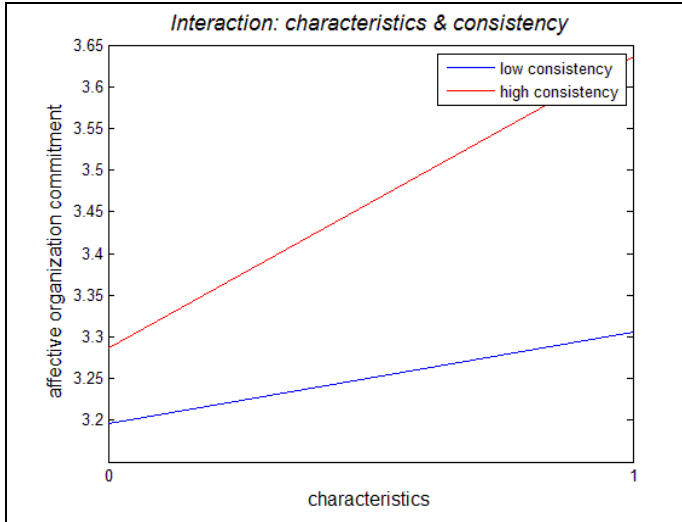
**Figure 1.3** Moderator effect of consensus among different figureheads on the positive relationship between figurehead characteristics and change readiness



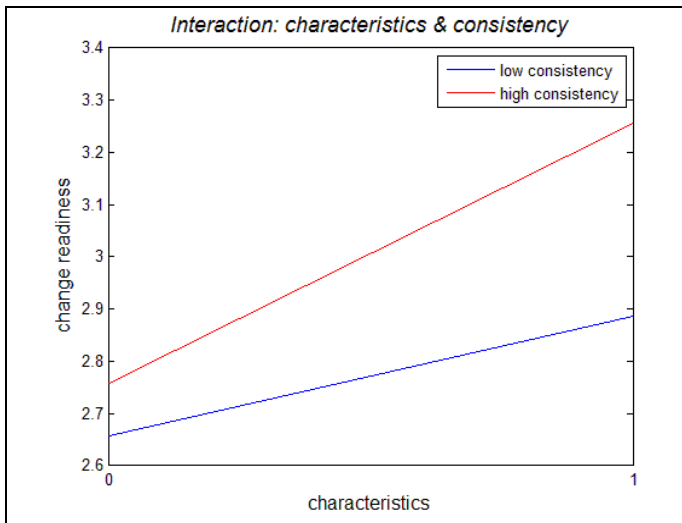
**Figure 1.4** Moderator effect of distinctiveness of change messages on the positive relationship between figurehead characteristics and affective organization commitment



**Figure 1.5** Moderator effect of distinctiveness of change messages on the negative relationship between figurehead characteristics and resistance to change



**Figure 1.6** Moderator effect of consistent change messages on the positive relationship between figurehead characteristics and affective organization commitment



**Figure 1.7** Moderator effect of consistent change messages on the positive relationship between figurehead characteristics and change readiness

**Table 3.** Results of regression analysis with affective organization commitment, change readiness and resistance to change as dependent variable

	Dependent variable: Affective organization commitment				Dependent variable: Change readiness				Dependent variable: Resistance to change			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<i>Individual level:</i>												
Gender	0.18*	0.16	0.16*	0.22**	0.14	0.10	0.10	0.14	-0.19**	-0.11	-0.12	-0.10
Age	0.13	0.12	0.11	0.08	0.19*	0.16	0.16	0.14	-0.08	-0.04	-0.02	-0.03
Managerial position	-0.16*	-0.14	-0.14	-0.10	-0.25**	-0.22**	-0.22**	-0.20**	0.13	0.08	0.08	0.09
Dummy Institution 1	-0.16	-0.18	-0.20*	-0.22*	0.08	0.03	0.00	-0.01	-0.51**	-0.41**	-0.34**	-0.35**
Dummy Institution 2	-0.10	-0.09	-0.09	-0.11	-0.00	0.02	0.01	0.00	-0.12	-0.16*	-0.13	-0.14
Dummy Institution 3	-0.14	-0.16	-0.17	-0.16	0.07	0.02	0.01	0.02	-0.13	-0.05	-0.02	-0.01
Characteristics		0.11	0.09	0.17*		0.23**	0.20*	0.24**		-0.41**	-0.32**	-0.30**
Consensus			0.05	0.04			0.07	0.07			-0.20**	-0.20**
<i>Interaction with consensus:</i>												
Characteristics				0.34**				0.21**				0.09
R <sup>2</sup>	0.10	0.11	0.11	0.21	0.10	0.14	0.15	0.18	0.23	0.38	0.41	0.42
ΔR <sup>2</sup>	0.06	0.07	0.06	0.16	0.06	0.10	0.10	0.13	0.20	0.36	0.38	0.38

**Note:** \* =  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* =  $p < 0.01$



**Table 4.** Results of regression analysis with affective organization commitment, change readiness and resistance to change as dependent variable

	Dependent variable: Affective organization commitment				Dependent variable: Change readiness				Dependent variable: Resistance to change			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<i>Individual level:</i>												
Gender	0.18*	0.16*	0.12	0.14	0.14	0.10	0.01	0.02	-0.19**	-0.11**	-0.06	-0.04
Age	0.13	0.12	0.08	0.08	0.19*	0.16	0.09	0.09	-0.08	-0.04	0.01	0.01
Managerial position	-0.16*	-0.14	-0.12	-0.10	-0.25**	-0.22**	-0.17*	-0.16*	0.13	0.08	0.05	0.06
Dummy Institution 1	-0.16	-0.18	-0.21*	-0.21*	0.08	0.03	-0.04	-0.04	-0.51**	-0.41**	-0.37**	-0.37**
Dummy Institution 2	-0.10	-0.09	-0.10	-0.10	-0.00	0.02	-0.01	-0.01	-0.12	-0.16*	-0.14*	-0.14*
Dummy Institution 3	-0.14	-0.16	-0.18*	-0.18*	0.07	0.03	-0.01	-0.01	-0.13	-0.05	-0.02	-0.02
Characteristics		0.11	0.01	0.05		0.23**	0.02	0.04		-0.41**	-0.28**	-0.24**
Distinctiveness			0.23**	0.20*			0.47**	0.46**			-0.31**	-0.34**
<i>Interaction with distinctiveness:</i>												
Characteristics				0.17*				0.07				0.14*
R <sup>2</sup>	0.10	0.11	0.14	0.17	0.10	0.14	0.30	0.31	0.23	0.38	0.45	0.47
ΔR <sup>2</sup>	0.06	0.07	0.10	0.12	0.06	0.10	0.26	0.26	0.20	0.36	0.42	0.44

**Note:** \* =  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* =  $p < 0.01$

**Table 5.** Results of regression analysis with affective organization commitment, change readiness and resistance to change as dependent variable

	Dependent variable: Affective organization commitment				Dependent variable: Change readiness				Dependent variable: Resistance to change			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<i>Individual level:</i>												
Gender	0.18*	0.16*	0.15	0.17*	0.14	0.10	0.08	0.11	-0.19**	-0.11	-0.08	-0.07
Age	0.13	0.12	0.11	0.10	0.19*	0.16	0.16	0.15	-0.08	-0.04	-0.02	-0.02
Managerial position	-0.16*	-0.14	-0.13	-0.12	-0.25**	-0.22**	-0.21**	-0.19**	0.13	0.08	0.06	0.06
Dummy Institution 1	-0.16	-0.18	-0.21*	-0.23**	0.08	0.03	-0.00	-0.03	-0.51**	-0.41**	-0.36**	-0.36**
Dummy Institution 2	-0.10	-0.09	-0.11	-0.10	-0.00	0.02	-0.01	0.00	-0.12	-0.16*	-0.11	-0.11
Dummy Institution 3	-0.14	-0.16	-0.18*	-0.19*	0.07	0.02	0.00	-0.01	-0.13	-0.05	-0.01	-0.01
Characteristics		0.11	0.06	0.11		0.23**	0.18*	0.23**		-0.41**	-0.31**	-0.31**
Consistency			0.11	0.09			0.13	0.10			-0.24**	-0.24**
<i>Interaction with consistency:</i>												
Characteristics				0.24**				0.27**				0.06
R <sup>2</sup>	0.10	0.11	0.12	0.17	0.10	0.14	0.16	0.22	0.23	0.39	0.43	0.43
ΔR <sup>2</sup>	0.06	0.07	0.07	0.12	0.06	0.10	0.11	0.18	0.20	0.36	0.40	0.40

**Note:** \* =  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* =  $p < 0.01$

## **Discussion**

### *Conclusion & Discussion*

The main target of this research has been to examine how a successful organizational change can be achieved by focusing on what characteristics a figurehead should possess to increase the chance of a successful change. In addition, attention has been paid to the key features of the attribution theory based on an article by Bowen and Ostroff (2004). They suggest that the content is moderated by the process. It is important to have your content straightened out, which implies the introduction of a figurehead with the right characteristics. This research had elaborated whether this content (figurehead characteristics) is moderated by the process side (consensus among different figureheads, distinctive and consistent messages).

The results showed that the first hypothesis is partly confirmed. When employees perceive the figurehead as credible, likeable and trustworthy (characteristics), they were more ready to change and showed a lower change resistance. The results also showed that there is a stronger relation between figurehead characteristics and change readiness for employees with a managerial position than for employees without a managerial position. Between figurehead characteristics and affective organization commitment no significant relationship has been found. This may be explained by the fact that affective organization commitment is not the appropriate variable to measure success of change, because this variable is perhaps too general and employees may not link it directly to the change process. When employees are asked about their perceptions of an organizational change, they would probably find it easier to express their feelings about their change readiness and their resistance than their commitment to the organization. It might be better to measure the employees' affective commitment to their work, as Millward and Hopkins (2006) stated that employees are often more committed to their work than committed to the organization.

A moderator effect has been found on the effect of consensus among different figureheads on the positive relationship between figurehead characteristics and affective organization commitment and change readiness (see Figure 1.2 & 1.3). This implies that high consensus among different figureheads is actually a prerequisite for affective organization commitment of employees if the figurehead possesses the right characteristics. Instead, perceived consensus among different figureheads did not have a

moderating effect on the negative relationship between figurehead characteristics and resistance to change. This may be explained by the fact that employees indicated in the questionnaire that they have received information about the change from only one or two information sources. Resistance is more focused on the individual level and employees may therefore be inclined more to focus on one source they trust the most and which they have the most binding with.

When employees perceive change messages sent as distinctive, it strengthened the positive relationship between figurehead characteristics and affective organization commitment (see Figure 1.4) This means in case the figurehead possess the right characteristics the perception of distinctive change messages is actually a prerequisite for affective organization commitment of employees. The perception of distinctive change messages did not have a moderating effect on the positive relationship between figurehead characteristics and change readiness. Instead a mediating effect was found for the perception of distinctive change messages. When adding the construct distinctive messages to the analysis this effect for distinctive messages on change readiness was found significant. The previously significant relation between the independent variable (figurehead characteristics) and the dependent variable (change readiness) was no longer significant. It may be noticed that the two constructs are highly correlated. This is probably explicable by the fact that when a figurehead has certain characteristics (credibility, likeability and trustworthiness) employees will pay more attention to the distinctiveness of the messages. This focus on distinctive change messages then in turn leads to more change readiness. It was pointed out by Petty and Cacioppo (1981) that when an issue is personally relevant or involving, people will be more motivated to think about this information when it is provided by a highly credible source instead of a low credible source. Moreover, the perception of distinctive messages did not have a moderating effect on the negative relationship between figurehead characteristics and resistance to change. Instead there was a significant positive relationship found (see Figure1.5). When employees perceive the figurehead as not credible, trustworthy and when they do not like their figurehead, a distinctive change message is important to create a lower change resistance by employees. But when employees perceive the figurehead as credible, likeable and trustworthy, it is of less importance that the proclaimed change message is distinctive. This can perhaps be explained due to the fact

that if employees perceive the figurehead as credible, likeable and trustworthy, they simply receive the introduced change message as being well-intentioned and that the need for change can be justified without the need for verifying the contents of this message.

When employees perceive the messages sent about the change as consistent, it strengthened the positive relationship between figurehead characteristics and affective organization commitment and change readiness (see Figure 1.6 & 1.7). This means that the perception of consistent change messages is actually a prerequisite for affective organization commitment of employees when the figurehead possesses the right characteristics. No moderating effect has been found for the perception of consistent change messages on the negative relationship between characteristics of the figurehead and resistance to change. This can be explained by the fact that employees pay more attention on one communication vehicle. For example, employees prefer to hear oral messages instead of mass communication (Larkin & Larkin, 1995) and therefore they tend to focus on oral messages sent by their own frontline manager rather than on e-mails or intranet messages. Therefore, they are probably less able to assess consistency between change messages.

It has been found that significant effects in this research vary per health care institution. The differences found between healthcare institutions could be explained by the fact that one healthcare institution has a stronger and more visible figurehead than another. A more visible figurehead is probably better to be judged, which could have a great influence on the acquired results.

In addition, attention has been paid to who is presented and visualized as the figurehead by the healthcare institution. Furthermore, the employees are also asked to indicate who they saw as the most credible and important figurehead that provides them the information about the change. In health care institution one and two the communication departments were appointed by the healthcare institutions as the figurehead for communicating the change to employees. In healthcare institution three, the frontline managers were appointed by the healthcare institution as the figurehead and in health care institution four the location manager (part of higher management) was appointed as the figurehead. The presented and visualized figurehead in healthcare institution four (location manager) was also recognized by the employees as the figurehead for communicating the change. Healthcare institution three introduced the

frontline managers as the figurehead and almost all employees called the frontline manager as their most important figurehead for communicating the change. In healthcare institution one and two the appointed figurehead (communication department) did not match with the figurehead called for by the employees. The communication department was at most appointed as the figurehead, but the employees called their own frontline manager as the most important figurehead in most cases. The reason that their own frontline manager is called as the most reliable and important source can be a consequence of the fact that people prefer to hear the change messages orally rather than by mass communication. It is also suggested by Larkin and Larkin (1995) that face to face communication is always the best way to communicate a major change to the frontline workforce. In addition, the communication department is probably not well enough profiled as the figurehead and has probably dropped flawed in presenting and visualizing themselves as the figurehead for communicating the change to the employees.

In summary, this study shows the effect of the perception of certain figurehead characteristics on the success of an organizational change. By focusing on the moderating effect of the process side on the content as stated by Bowen and Ostroff (2004), this study provides an empirical test that the perception of consensus among different figureheads and the perception of distinctive and consistent messages strengthens the positive relationship between figurehead characteristics and a successful organizational change.

### *Limitations*

As mentioned above, affective organization commitment is probably not the most appropriate construct for measuring success of change. Feelings about the readiness for change and any feelings of resistance to change are probably easier to express for the employees. Affective organization commitment also plays and played a role beyond the change. In addition, literature shows (Millward & Hopkins, 2006) that employees are often more committed to their work than committed to the organization. It might be better to choose constructs that directly reflects the perceptions of a change process, like the other constructs of this research 'change readiness' and 'resistance to change'.

The four health care institutions included in this research, were all four dealing with a major change. However, they were not dealing with compulsory redundancies.

Because there was no burning platform or a real treat, employees were more ready to change and showed therefore a low resistance to change. In cases when health care institutions have to deal with redundancies, it may be possible that a credible, likeable and trustworthy figurehead will not have a positive effect on the change readiness and the resistance to change because they could have the feeling that they have to deal with it. Moreover, the type of sector (health care) can also be of influence on the found results. It could be possible that people who work in non-profit organizations are more involved with their work than people working for profit organizations. The characteristics of this type of employee could possibly be of influence for the found results.

Furthermore, in this research it is only examined who is called by employees as the most important and reliable figurehead for receiving information about the change. It revealed that the (own) frontline manager was the most important, followed by the higher management. In one of the four health care institutions, the Communication department was the main figurehead for providing information about the change. But the Communication department was hardly mentioned by the employees as the most important figurehead. Instead the employees called their own frontline manager or the higher management as the most important and reliable figurehead. In future research, it could be investigated for what reasons one party is mentioned as more important and reliable for receiving information about the change than other parties.

In this research the perception of distinctive change messages by employees played a mediating role in the relationship between figurehead characteristics and change readiness instead of a moderating role. In further research this mediating role of distinctive change messages could be further explored.

*Recommendations: using the ingredients for a successful change*

For healthcare institutions which are dealing with major changes the following ingredients are important for enhancing the success of change. First, you have to ensure that you present and visualize a figurehead who is perceived as credible, trustworthy and likeable by employees because this will lead to more readiness to change and a low resistance to change by employees. The employees in this research already indicate that they see their own frontline manager or the higher management as most credible and

important for receiving information about the change. Health care institutions can introduce the frontline managers or the higher management as the figurehead for communicating the change to employees. Note that by introducing the frontline managers as figurehead instead of the higher management (management directors) you have to ensure that there is strong consensus between the different frontline managers. This research indicates that perceived consensus among figureheads will strengthen the relation between figurehead characteristics (credibility, trustworthiness and likeability) of the figurehead and change readiness by employees.

Ensuring that there is consensus among different figureheads is therefore the second ingredient. It is easiest and most preferable to introduce and visualize just one figurehead in order to circumvent the consensus problem. However, in most cases respondents indicate their own frontline manager as the most important and reliable figurehead. Therefore an organization can decide to introduce the frontline manager as figurehead. Mostly there are multiple frontline managers in an organization and therefore multiple figureheads should be appointed. HRM and the Communication department play an important role at this point, because they are the directors of the change message and their views and goals about the change have to be really clear. They have to guide and coach the frontline managers to show consensus explicitly to the workforce. In other words, the different frontline managers can send unambiguous and internally consistent messages about the change to the employees.

Third, it is important for the health care institutions to ensure that the messages sent about the change are consistent. With consistent messages you can better clarify your intentions.

Finally, for achieving affective organization commitment of employees, health care institutions should ensure that the presented figurehead is credible, trustworthy and liked, that there is high consensus among the different figureheads. Further, ensure that the change message is understandable for employees and make them see the relevance to change for the organization and for themselves (distinctive change message) and also ensure that the change message is perceived as consistent.



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## **Appendix**

### *Appendix 1: Reform of the Dutch public health system*

Healthcare staff in the in the healthcare institutions will in the coming period be faced with major changes in the performance of their jobs. This because the healthcare system in the Netherlands is drastically reformed due to the introduction of a new health insurance act in the beginning of 2006. This new act is called in Dutch, the *Zorgverzekeringswet (ZVW)*. The new health insurance act (ZVW) is in addition to the *Exceptional Medical Expenses Act*, which is called in Dutch *Algemene Wet Bijzondere Ziektekosten (AWBZ)*, part of the Dutch healthcare insurance system. The ZVW establishes a mandatory health insurance for everyone who is insured under the AWBZ and requires a personal fee (Rijksoverheid, 2010). This represents all Dutch residents and people who live abroad but receive earnings from the Netherlands. The extent of the coverage of the obligatory health insurance for every individual is determined by the underlying legislation of the ZVW that is determined by the government. This insurance act obliges insurers to accept every individual including the ones with chronically diseases. The insurers are also not allowed to stop the health insurance of an individual due to bad health insurance claims experience or worse life expectancy. The AWBZ is a collective health insurance act that covers the insurable disease risks and is a so-called national insurance. Under this law specific medical costs of prolonged hospitalization or treatments in specialized institutions are covered in contrast to the ZVW. AWBZ also entitles nursing and residential care such as facilities for the mentally or physical handicapped. Currently in the Netherlands, major new changes take place in the public health care system. By the continuously increasing costs of the AWBZ and the attendant pressures on the collective burden for the coming years a change of this specific law is expected. The total health care spending increases year after year due to a higher life expectancy and the individualization of society. One possibility that is being discussed is to remove portions of the AWBZ and move these parts to the ZVW. This results into higher premiums of the ZVW because these parts are not longer part of the collective insurance and results that health insurance companies are becoming a more major player. These insurance companies have only one specific goal namely the care profits in relation to the care revenues. This will enter the supply and demand principle much more

resulting in higher premiums and significant cuts are predicted for the total health care system in the Netherlands.

Another change has been started last year and is this year effective by the introduction of the Zorgzwaartebekostiging (ZZP), which are Resource Utilization Packages (Rijksoverheid, 2010). The funding for health care is therefore more attuned and simultaneously is the care institution more settled than in the past on the actual production delivered. The employees of healthcare institutions have to be more focused on the actual delivered production of healthcare products requiring a change of their working attitude.

In addition to the abovementioned changes, hospitals in the Netherlands have to deal with other reforms in the health care system that were demanded by the Dutch government. In the year 2005, the Dutch government introduced a new legislation, which is called Diagnose Behandel Combinantie (DBC, 2010), in order to improve the efficiency, performance and market-conform funding of hospitals and specialist medical help. Before the introduction of this legislation all the medical treatments were claimed separately. The more treatments, the more declarations of expenses could be claimed, which results into an inefficient hospital organization. By introducing the DBC legislation, the performance of hospitals and medical specialists will be expressed in the so-called total care products with rates that are more based on the real delivered services and costs, which are based on a mutual agreement between the hospital and health care insurer. This opposed to budgeting a hospital by the government in an old fashioned way based on for example the amount of beds in the hospital, etc. Each so-called care product stands for a complete treatment of a patient with all the necessary hospital activities within this specific care demand. This encourages hospitals to work efficiently because a hospital receives a fixed amount per treatment based on the delivered work by medical specialists. As a result of this legislation, hospitals can now compete with each other on price and quality.