

**OCL7840–ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE LEADERSHIP
Seminar Research Paper**

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Introduction

Constant change has impacts that are far reaching. “Disruption in the world of work is here to stay. It will continually alter workplaces, workforces, workspaces, workflows and workload” (Hoogerhuis & Anderson, 2019, p. 8). This seminar paper will focus on the connection between organizational cynicism and the intention to resist change. This includes exploring the role that leadership plays in building trust, how constant change can erode organizational integrity, the impact change methodology has on outcomes, and generational views on change. While resistance to change can be overcome via a strong, robust organizational change management plan and leadership, the long-term impacts of poorly managed change efforts can lead to organizational cynicism and poor job satisfaction. These factors can impact a company’s culture and financial outlook (Creasey, 2021).

Change can impact individuals and companies on multiple levels: “Evidence shows that organizational change is a primary trigger to higher levels of workplace stress, and this lack of resilience in the workforce requires a very specific type of leadership” (Blacharski, 2020, p. 1). Change does not recognize or care about the carnage it brings to companies or its employees. It rolls downhill, and if left unattended, can cause collateral damage to the mental health, work-life balance, and overall job satisfaction of a company’s employees. As constant change efforts stack up, the resistance to this change breeds cynicism and disbelief that leadership and the company are headed in the right direction. Change is occurring at a rate that is much greater than in past decades. In fact, change is exponentially greater, speeding up remarkably (Talin, 2021). Stress at work is felt by 40 percent of workers, and three-fourths believe that stress is greater than what the previous generation dealt with (Blacharski, 2020).

Organizational trust, episodic stress, role overload, and job satisfaction are four characteristic variables that help predict the impacts of change and ultimately, cynicism (Grama & Todericiu, 2016). Strong leadership is necessary to combat the constant change and stress that employees are dealing with in today's workplace. Without organizational change leadership, a company's culture can be negatively impacted, leading to both dissatisfaction and attrition of key talent. Employees that experience change are more than three times likely to look for a new employer compared to those with no recent, current or anticipated change (Brooks, 2017). To survive in today's marketplace, a company must carefully consider the short and long-term impacts of the changes they wish to introduce knowing they will impact the mental wellbeing of their employees and potentially introduce turnover if not lead successfully: "Change is inevitable in organizations, and when it happens, leadership often underestimates the impact those changes have on employees" (Brooks, 2017, p. 7).

There are many recent examples to draw upon when thinking about the rate and pace of change in the work place. During the global pandemic of 2020, change was ever present. Companies like Amazon and Walmart flourished because of their robust online ordering and delivering abilities, while traditional brick and mortar retail businesses without an online presence suffered greatly. Perhaps one of the reasons traditional retailers suffered was because they were unwilling to change, or unable to see that change would have a positive impact on their business model. Cynicism to change can occur both at the individual and corporate level, so the organization must truly consider the impacts that making the change will have and also the impacts ignoring the need to change will have. While many examples exist, the home video rental business is one that illustrates how an unwillingness to change can erode an entire business model. Take for example, Blockbuster Video, Family Video, and others in that space. They

refused to recognize that technology trends and streaming of video would diminish the popularity of video rentals. Perhaps cynicism to change played a part in their decision making, or perhaps they thought the trend was fleeting. Regardless, Blockbuster and their peers were unable to predict how cynicism to change would impact the long-term viability of their business model.

Cynicism to Change

The origin of cynicism “can be traced back to fourth century Greece where a group who called them themselves Antisthenes openly questioned the existence of government and religious institutions. They floated popular opinion or public convictions simply for the sake of doing so. Cynicism was later revived as a school of thought and propagated the idea of mockery of convention and tradition and prevailing beliefs and modes of behavior” (Durrah, Chaudhary, Gharib, p. 3). Cynicism is often defined as a lack of belief or mistrust that someone else’s motives are not pure. Cynics believe that other’s actions are guided by desires of greed and perhaps ambition rather than for the greater good. Simply stated, cynicism in an organization is a negative attitude towards the company. With the constant change occurring in our world, companies are forced to make tough decisions in terms of the rate and pace at which they decide to introduce change to their organization. A leader of people, and therefore a leader of change, is often between a rock and a hard place as they attempt to discern when and how to enact change. Constant change can breed deep cynicism within companies and their employees. Strong organizational change leadership can lessen the negative impact, reduce frustration, and build meaningful trust, thus creating a positive environment for change. “Organizational cynicism is specific to organizational change and implies a real loss in the trust in the leaders of change and can be the answer to attempts of change which are not transparently or fully successful” (Grama & Todericiu, 2016, p. 48). This capstone will research the Change-Specific Cynicism Scale in which data was collected from 86 participants. The intent of which was to predict whether there is a connection between cynicism and intent to resist change. The impacts of cynicism and resistance to change are felt both at the individual and organizational levels, often having an impact on an organization’s culture.

Engagement plays a key role in success: “To build trust and engagement, employers need to focus on building a psychologically healthy workplace where employees are actively involved in shaping the future and confident in the ability to succeed” (Brooks, 2017, p. 10). Having an engaged employee is a key step to becoming comfortable with constant change. It is a major component to breaking down the ‘us versus them’ mindset that exists between leaders and individual contributors. To that point, this paper will look to challenge the status quo in terms of change management. “Traditional change management focuses on processes and tools. Change management typically is about minimizing disruption, and it often underemphasizes the behavioral side of change” (Hoogerhuis & Anderson, 2019, p. 3). Does a mindset of minimizing disruption work in today’s environment of constant change? As Hoogerhuis and Anderson (2019) point out, the companies that are winning today have strong change leaders, not change managers. Kotter (2011) explored the difference between the concept of change leaders versus change managers: “These terms are not interchangeable. The distinction between the two is actually quite significant. Change management refers to a set of tools and structures intended to keep any change effort under control. The goal is often to minimize the distractions and impacts of the change. Change leadership concerns the driving forces, visions and processes that fuel large-scale transformation” (Kotter, 2011, p. 1). An analogy of sorts that can be applied to further differentiate between the two concepts would be to think about change management as the tools and processes to keep change under control to quell the rebellion among the employees, while change leadership would be like placing a high performance engine on the change process to ensure efficiency of the change. Finally, change leadership is about “empowering lots and lots of people” and getting that mass of people to change quickly (Kotter, 2011, p. 4).

As we think about the constant change needed to be driven by companies to ensure their success, solid change leadership is an essential aspect of reducing cynicism and resistance. A company can have change tools and change managers of those tools and processes, but without the trusted change leadership that empowers the employees and makes them feel comfortable with the change, cynicism will reign supreme. This can lead to change failure, poor company culture and likely turnover via change burnout. By being a strong change leader “you can inspire, inform, empower, and engage your most powerful ambassadors, and successfully lead your company into the future” (Galbraith, 2018, p. 23). Organizational cynicism is nothing new, but the impacts are perhaps felt at a greater, deeper level than before given the advent of digital trends, such as social media and the constant connectedness that we feel. The adage that news travels fast has never been more true or accurate than it is now. Individuals at a company are taking the brunt of the change efforts that companies are implementing and the impacts this has on employee health are just now being understood.

Organizational cynicism has a negative impact on employee performance. It has been researched extensively, with cynicism towards change being one of the main tenants. Breaking this down further, cognitive cynicism, affective cynicism, and behavioral cynicism all play a part in individual performance (Durrah et al., 2019). Cognitive cynicism is rooted in the belief that the company does not have the individual’s best interest in mind, often showing a lack of caring of the employee’s well-being. Affective cynicism is the emotional and sentimental aspect. The result of feeling aggravated and frustrated with the organization is an employee that demonstrates arrogance and superior knowledge than what the organization is offering. Behavioral cynicism can be summed up as attitudinal issues such as sarcasm, criticism of the organization, negative behaviors, and bad mouthing (Durrah et al., 2019). In the end, these forms

of cynicism towards change lead to one result, an individual who is disenfranchised with the organization and likely performing at a low level. They are not engaged, do not trust their leadership, and can derail other's success due to their behaviors.

Organizational climate, because of individual cynicism towards change, can be altered for the worse if not led proactively. A change leader will ensure that they are meeting individuals where they are at in terms of their change curve. They will ensure the individual's perspectives and concerns are heard, and ultimately incorporated into the change that will be implemented. The power of seeking buy-in and showing that the leader cares about the impact the change will have, cannot be understated. An organization that has a poor climate, or culture, is tough to turn around. This leads to issues with the talent pipeline as the organization has difficulty attracting and retaining key talent. Organizational climate is a direct reflection on leadership, and during the digital age as discussed earlier, is a critical piece that must be considered. At times, change leaders overlook the pride that the individual has in their work and the impact that their work has on the organization. Organizational pride is the opposite of organizational cynicism. The individual is completely engaged and positive about the work, the direction the company is headed in, the leadership they work with, and the change they help to lead. In essence, they are empowered and have complete trust that the company has their best interests in mind, all while showing that they are valued and appreciated. This provides a unique situation for change leaders to consider. How can a change leader enact the necessary change needed for the company to survive in today's marketplace while also building trust and belief that his or her direction is heartfelt and not disingenuous? A change leader can employ several approaches to this scenario, which might include having open and honest conversations about the changes that are forthcoming. They might express their own anxieties or perhaps where they currently fall on the

change curve. All the while, the change leader is showing empathy regarding the change or the amount of change. A change leader can also seek to be inclusive, seek to understand, and show flexibility in their approach. This type of behavior and approach has nothing to do with change management (tools and processes), and everything to do with change leadership.

Organizational pride, stemming from the feeling of belonging, and the feeling of being respected and appreciated, result in reduced stress and reduced organizational turnover (Durrain et al., 2019). It is commonly known that in today's workforce, individuals quit their boss, not their job. This really speaks to the fact that leaders, or change leaders, often get in the way of their employees doing their job effectively. By connecting personally with the individual, learning what makes them tick, and fully understanding how to lead that individual, change leaders can find a path forward that creates a work atmosphere of empowerment and trust. This leads to less change resistance over time and less cynicism because the individual has already bought into the leadership approach of the team and organization.

One aspect not mentioned thus far is the role of generational forces, attitudes, and behaviors. Millennials account for 35 percent of the workforce, and they are the least fearful of change of the generations that currently make up the workforce (Chavez, 2019). Coupling the make-up of the workforce with the constant need for change in today's work environment, it is extremely clear that change leadership is table stakes for organizations that wish to remain viable in today's workplace. This complicates things further for the change leader when taking into consideration the need to connect on a personal level with those they are leading. Having the ability to connect with a Millennial, Baby Boomer, and Generation X can be a daunting task, yet it the importance cannot be overstated because it helps drive organizational climate, respect,

pride, appreciation, and trust. Collectively, all these things matter if a change leader and an organization are to enact successful, rapid, and constant change across the organization.

Purpose of the Research

Understanding that cynicism to change at an individual level can impact an organization's ability to enact change successfully provides the vehicle for additional research to occur. Does cynicism to change (CTC), including the cognitive, affective, and behavioral cynicism, truly have a detrimental impact to the organization as a whole? Can cynicism to change and the cynical behaviors displayed by employees be mitigated through change leadership practices? Does cynicism to change occur when an employee is emotionally left adrift as the feelings of lack of belonging and appreciation waiver? Is there a mental health impact to the individual and team, related to cynicism to change? These are all facets to consider as the paper explores a few specific research examples that delve deeper into why an employee expresses cynicism in the workplace. "In general, organizational cynicism has a negative relationship with many variables such as employee's performance, work performance in the organization, organizational commitment, quality of life, and change" (Durrah et al., 2019, p. 12).

While there are many ways to collect information to determine the extent of organizational cynicism, interviews and surveys are a research method employed to ascertain the opinions and perspectives of employees. The questionnaire in Table 1 provides an example of a quick way that a change leader can gather data and metrics to identify gaps in their approach to leading change effectively and efficiently. Each of the statements in the survey can be used to determine if feelings such as distrust in leadership, alienation, lack of hope, or change fatigue are occurring. As stated earlier, many of these statements in the survey help to illustrate the differences between change management and change leadership. There is quite a bit of language pertaining to emotion, such as anxiety, aggravation, and tension, and not verbiage related to

change process or tools. This drives home the need for change leadership, the power of change leadership, and the value of change leadership.

Table 1 - Questionnaire

No.	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Organizational Cynicism						
1	I believe that my company says one thing and does another.					
2	When I think about my company, I feel a sense of anxiety.					
3	My company expects one thing of its employees, but rewards another.					
4	When I think about my company, I experience aggravation.					
5	We look at each other in a meaningful way with my colleagues when my institution and its employees are mentioned.					
6	When I think about my company, I experience tension.					
7	When I think about my company, I get angry.					
8	I criticize the practices and policies of my company to people outside the hospital.					
9	In my company I see very little resemblance between the events that are going to be done and the events which are done.					
10	My company's policies, goals, and practices seem to have little in common					
11	I talk with others about how work is being carried out in the company.					
12	If an application was said to be done in my company, I'd be more skeptical whether it would happen or not.					

Questionnaire. *Used to gather data, metrics, and identify gaps in a leader's approach to leading change (Durrah et al., 2019, p. 13).*

Significance of the Research

The significance of the research into cynicism is clear in that it seeks to tie employee attitudes and behaviors to organizational outcomes (Grama & Todericiu, 2016). Grama and Todericiu (2016) point out that the implications of the research are that cynicism can have devastating effects on organizations: “Very few attempts have been made regarding the development, design, or adaptation of instruments that measure cynicism as a reaction to resisting organizational change” (Grama & Todericiu, 2016, p. 51). As previously mentioned, one can use surveys to collect data and provide some preliminary measurements of how deep or wide cynicism is within the organization, but a deeper look is necessary if an organization truly wants to curb cynicism.. Every person experiences change, whether it is in their personal life or work life. Each person deals with change differently and travels along the change curve at a different pace. The significance of the research conducted in Table 1 points to key factors that lead to or create cynicism towards change. The research also delves into the personal reasons why an individual demonstrates cynicism. A change leader can proactively plan and address the likelihood of resistance and cynicism if they truly understand their audience and have connected with their team. But, having the full picture of data and measurements will play a pivotal role in that change leaders’ ability to be successful. “Understanding the reason for which some employees can resist change can have major financial implications for the organization” (Grama & Todericiu, 2016, p. 47).

Literature Review

As noted earlier in the paper, an important factor to consider with change is the role that the change audience plays in the change being implemented. For example, if an I.T. department is rolling out a new organizational structure, which is a scenario that can create anxiety and concern for most employees, a change leader might consider being inclusive in their approach. The change leader may seek input from all levels of the department to help better inform their decision making. This, in turn, leads to an environment where the employee feels valued and heard, and it also serves to build trust between management and their employees. While this cannot always be accomplished due to the confidential nature of some changes, by seeking to be inclusive, the change leader will likely be more successful long-term. Without this approach, an individual employee will feel out of the loop, disconnected, devalued, and perhaps lack hope and trust in the direction that leadership is suggesting. Often an individual's self-defense mechanisms show up as cynicism to the pending change. These walls are natural because the individual is unsure of what the pending change means for them, their job, and its impact on their livelihood. Ultimately, the individual is looking to protect themselves from disappointment (Grama & Todericiu, 2016). It behooves the change leader to factor all of this into consideration prior to creating awareness for the change they are looking to lead.

To further the discussion on cynicism to change, Grama and Todiericiu (2016) noted a research study that was conducted on a Romanian population of 86 participants ranging in ages 29 to 59. These were full-time employees, working a typical 40-hour work week. The average age of the employee was 36, with 67.9 percent of participants being women, and 32.1 percent men (Grama & Todericiu, 2016). These participants all were subjected to typical change initiatives that an organization would encounter, such as layoffs, salary cuts, reorganizations, and

the lack of job security that results from these types of changes. While the research test bed is small in numbers, it provides great perspective into the personal and professional changes that are constantly impacting employees in the workplace. “Cynicism has been associated with a number of negative elements such as apathy, resignation, alienation, lack of hope, lack of trust in others, suspicion, disillusion or low performance, interpersonal conflicts, absenteeism, and exhaustion” (Grama & Todericiu, 2016, p. 48). The individuals in the case study likely experienced most, if not all, of these elements as they went through large change initiatives like the ones mentioned above. The results of the Romanian study indicate that a level of trust between the individual and management needs to exist, allowing change to take place more easily. When cynicism was recognized and addressed, the employee’s commitment and belief in the organization grew. This further solidifies the point that an individual’s cynicism towards change can be positively or negatively impacted through exposure, or lack of exposure, to change leadership. In fact, an individual’s response to these changes are influenced by past work-life experiences (Grama & Todericiu, 2016). For example, if the Romanian company was implementing a change to layoff part of its workforce, simply adding change management around the initiative is not enough. Change management will provide the tools and process, but not the thought leadership and personal touch points needed to effectively implement the change. Change leadership, in this case, would entail open communications regarding why the change is being made. Is the company struggling in some form or fashion, and why? Are the layoffs a temporary stop gap or a permanent change? How deep are the layoffs? What is the timeline for the layoffs? All these questions can be proactively thought through while also considering the impact the decision and announcement will have on the individual. This type of leadership will be necessary if the company wishes to successfully implement the change and avoid widespread

organizational cynicism towards the management team. Again, through transparency, the management team can build as much trust as possible with the employees, even while delivering a very difficult message. While messaging and mitigating communications are not enough, especially for unpopular changes, a change leader can outline the support they will put in place for those impacted by something like a corporate layoff. Considerations such as job placement assistance, resume writing, and interview refreshers can be arranged through a third-party. This transparency may never be enough during such difficult change initiatives, but it can illustrate the type of leadership that most can respect.

While understanding the elements of cynicism, the question of how to measure cynicism to change remains. There have been numerous studies, but Stanley (1998) discussed a study by Kanter and Mirvis that provided some insights during a national survey in 1989 where a series of questions were asked that identified intentionality of change and motive. Building on the gaps that existed within the Kanter and Mirvis measurements, Stanley (1998) also discussed a study by Reichers, Wanous and Austin that was created in 1997 and provided an eight-point scale to measure faith in leadership to successfully implement change. These studies, along with others, led to the conclusion that there are two forms of cynicism: Management-Specific Cynicism and Dispositional Cynicism (Stanley, 1998). The former occurs when an individual questions management's motives, decisions, and actions. The latter occurs when an individual questions everyone's motives, decisions, and actions, not just management's (Stanley, 1998). These distinctions help to further build a more detailed definition of cynicism than what was provided in the introduction. This is important, especially as it relates to change leadership because it provides additional focus area and details. The change leader can consider these as they apply the thought leadership necessary to implement a successful change among individuals that are all

likely at varying degrees of cynicism. Specific variables have been identified by Stanley (1998) in Table 2, to measure cynicism to change.

Table 2 – Variables Used to Measure Cynicism

- Skepticism - Having doubts whether a change will be successful.
- Understanding reason for change - Individual does not understand the reasons for change and will not buy into the change.
- Problem importance - Individuals who fully understand the problem attempting to be solved is an important one.
- Management competence - Individuals believe management is competent and trust that the change will be successful.
- Commitment to change - Understanding the value, cost, and moral aspects related to the change.
- Intent to resist - Individuals who question motives are more likely to resist change.

Variables of Cynicism. *Variables used to measure cynicism to change and its' corresponding definition (Stanley, 1998).*

The variables listed in Table 2 can be combined into questions similar to what was provided in Table 1, to offer a comprehensive deep dive of data gathering for a team or organization. A change leader, for example, can utilize this form of data gathering pre-change and post-change to measure cynicism. It also provides clarity to the change leader in terms of what potentially went well with their approach to the change and where improvement

opportunities exist. Most importantly, the work that Stanley (1998) conducted ties skepticism and cynicism together, which tells the change leader that trust and transparency are paramount to success. There is potential to create a Change Specific Cynicism Scale through the combination of the data in the questionnaire and the variables used to measure cynicism. The questions can be weighted appropriately and through the pre and post survey analysis, a clear pattern should exist. A pattern of reduced cynicism and skepticism as the change progresses, if proper change leadership has been applied, should be realized.

Further research on cynicism was collected from two public sector organizations (administration of land title and publicly funded library services, arts, and theater). In total, 743 responses were utilized as part of this research where cynicism and pessimism toward change were measured via a series of surveys: “This research has shown that cynicism about organizational change can be reliably measured with two item sub-scales” (Albrecht, 2008, p. 5). Impacts are further felt: “At an individual level, researchers found that employee cynicism to change reduces individual commitment to the organization. At the organizational level, if employees are pessimistic about change, their bond to the organization is weakened” (DeCelles et al., 2014, p. 4). To better understand this research, we must delve into additional details.

Albrecht (2008) noted that organization 1 (administration of land title) received an overall response rate of 41 percent. Seventy-two percent were males and 28 percent were females, with an average age of the respondents being 39 years old. Of the respondents, 84 percent were full-time and 15 percent were part-time workers. Average tenure was 6.1 years. Albrecht (2008) noted that for organization 2 (publicly funded library services, arts, theater), the response rate was 33 percent, with 33 percent male respondents, 66 percent female respondents,

and an average respondent age of 42 years. Full-time workers made up 68 percent of the test bed while 18 percent were part-time. Average tenure at the company was 8.2 years.

To collect data from both organizations, a survey was included in their pay stubs and they were asked to return their responses via an anonymous return box. Similar to the survey example in Table 1, these two organizations used a point based scale developed by Wanous, Reichers, and Austin: “Employees were asked to indicate their agreement with change-related statements on a scale ranging from 1 – Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree. Lower scores suggest less cynicism toward change” (Albrecht, 2008, p4). Questions were included that focused on change cynicism which represents the full scale. Pessimism and dispositional cynicism were represented by the two sub-scales used in the following measurement in Table 3 (Albrecht, 2008, p. 5).

Table 3 – Change Cynicism, Pessimism, Dispositional Attribution

Descriptive Statistics, Alpha Reliabilities And Correlations For Cynicism About Organizational Change Scale And Sub-Scales, Organization 1 (N=410)

	Mean	Stnd Dev	Possible Range	Alpha	1	2	3
1 Change cynicism (8 items)	3.85	1.29	1-7	.93	—		
2 Pessimism (4 items)	3.85	1.37	1-7	.89	.95***	—	
3 Dispositional Attribution (4 items)	3.85	1.35	1-7	.88	.95***	.81***	—

*Note: *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed)*

Change Cynicism and Scales. Table 3 shows how pessimism and dispositional attribution represent change cynicism (Albrecht, 2008, p. 5).

The results show that the mean cynicism is 3.85, which is near the mid-point of the 7-point scale. This relates to ‘Neither Agree nor Disagree’ in terms of the survey response options. Further, the correlation between the two sub-scales and the full scale were high (.95). Reliability of the results was high as well, with Alpha ranging from .88 to .93.

While these metrics are great, what do they really tell the change leader about how they turn these metrics into action? There is a story to tell hidden in these metrics and it is important to relate that story back to the personal aspect of those being impacted by change. In the case of these two organizations, these metrics tell the change leader that the employees 'neither agree nor disagree' with statements like 'the people responsible for making changes here do not have the skills needed to do their jobs. This drives at managerial and change leadership cynicism (Albrecht, 2008). Another question utilized in this particular survey asked employees if they believe that the plans for future improvements will not amount to much (Albrecht, 2008). If an employee answers that they do believe plans for future improvement will not amount to much, this drives towards the employee having skepticism of change. While the descriptive analytics and reliabilities show that the standard mean does not agree nor disagree, this tells the change leader they have work to do to tip the scale towards agree or strongly agree. These metrics, if taken pre and post change, can provide a change specific cynicism scale with which a change leader can learn from. Ideally, a change leader would take these pre-change results (mean 3.85 = neither agree or disagree) and turn that into a mean of (6-7 = agree or strongly agree) in the post-change metric gathering. There is power in these results; the power to enact meaningful change while bringing others along in a positive and uplifting way. There is power in knowing that a leader's words carry weight and that the weight of those words greatly impact others' ability to believe in their direction. There is power in knowing that a change leader can destroy a person or a team's morale by not choosing their words carefully. Cynicism and skepticism towards change can be avoided or at the very least managed if both change management and change leadership are applied with foresight and care.

The final research group we will analyze and include in the paper was conducted by Thompson et al. (1999) with a federal aviation agency. Two areas of focus of this study included cynicism towards change and co-worker cynicism. In fact, the research boiled down to one term: fairness. By raising expectations of employees too high, or conversely, setting expectations too low, an organization runs the risk of increasing cynicism. The final aspect of fairness included in the research centered on the thought that allowing self-serving behavior to occur in the organization, at the expense of others, can also lead to greater cynicism (Thompson et al., 1999). The authors concluded with a thought-provoking question, “Whether day-to-day organizational events that may lead to perceptions of unfairness contribute to an employee’s level of cynicism” (Thompson et al., 1999, p. 2). The conversation goes deeper by looking at three categories that impact one’s perception of fairness. These include business environment characteristics (compensation, profits, layoffs), organizational characteristics (communication issues, lack of voice, poor treatment, managerial ineptitude), and finally job and role characteristics (lack of clear role definition, conflict, or work overload). While Thompson et al. (1999) merges these three categories into the definition and makeup of fairness, they really tie into the point touched on previously in the paper, which is a lack of trust. In the case of business environment, an employee will lose trust in their leaders if they feel they are not compensated properly or if they feel that executives are receiving profits inappropriately to what they themselves are receiving. An employee will lose trust if they experience organizational issues such as poor communication, poor treatment, or report to a manager they feel is inept at their job. Even worse, if that employee feels unappreciated or that their voice is not being heard, their perception of fairness is very low. In terms of role characteristics, an employee that feels their role is not

clearly defined or that their workload is too significant, especially as compared to their peers, will also feel the scenario is unfair.

Each of the characteristics above can be avoided with strong change leadership and strong managerial skills. It is important for the leader to recognize each of the categories above and understand that they, as leaders, have control over most of the items. While they may not necessarily have control over profits and how those are shared at the executive level, the leader certainly is able to find a way to positively message and influence their team through strong situational change leadership. For example, an employee is upset because they feel another team member is compensated at a different level than they are. They have heard rumors and have brought that to the attention of the manager. The leader has an opportunity to pivot the conversation through transparent and honest dialogue. They can ask the employee what their goal is in terms of compensation. The leader can use tools such as a career ladder discussion, openly talk about the strengths and opportunities the employee has and what they can do to get to the next level. This open discourse serves to build trust between the employee and leader. Ultimately, it is this type of transparency that will reduce perceptions of unfairness in the workplace, and dissolve cynicism that builds in the face of unfair treatment.

In the case of the federal agency study conducted by Thompson et al. (1999), the employees were asked to complete a survey. One hundred and twenty of the 125 employees responded, which is an incredibly high participation percentage (96 percent). Further breaking down respondent characteristics finds that 14 were management and 106 were non-management. Finally, all employees were guaranteed that the process was anonymous (Thompson et al., 1999). Similar to the previous two research examples in this paper, the respondents participated in a seven-point Likert-type scale. The scale consisted of 1-Strongly Disagree to 7-Strongly Agree,

and included items such as cynicism to change, co-worker cynicism, awards fairness (recognition), work distribution fairness, work level fairness, episodic stress, supervisory fairness, and organizational trust. The results of this research are interesting: “Forty-five percent of employees agreed they were cynical about individual change while 27 percent were cynical about organizational level change” (Thompson et al., 1999, p. 3). The research is conclusive in that fairness perceptions are indeed related to overall cynicism towards change: “When considered in conjunction with workplace characteristics, organizational trust and job satisfaction were the strongest predictors of cynicism” (Thompson et al., 1999, p. 3). A leader, or change leader, clearly must place importance on building personal connections with those they lead. These personal connections are foundational for trust and help to reduce workplace characteristics that lead to cynicism and lower overall job satisfaction. The federal agency research provides great research insight into the importance of change leadership, trust, and strong connectedness between management and their employees.

Organizational and Leadership Trust

Thus far, this paper has defined cynicism to change, explored some detailed research on how to identify and measure cynicism, and differentiated between change management and change leadership. While touching on the topic of leadership at points throughout the paper, it is important to take a deeper dive into the differences between leadership and management. Specifically, is there a difference between leading versus managing? Further, what leadership styles exist and how can they impact change initiatives in the workplace? Such an exploration might start by differentiating between leadership and management: “Management consists of controlling a group of or a set of entities to accomplish a goal. Leadership refers to an individual’s ability to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward organizational success. Influence and inspiration separate leaders from managers” (Nayar, 2013, p. 7). Nayar (2013) goes on to say that managers often create a small circle of power, whereas leaders create circles of influence. A telltale sign of a leader with a circle of influence occurs when others from outside the team or area seek out a person’s opinion or consult. The last differentiation here is that leaders are often talking about visions, purpose, and aspirations, not tasks (Nayar, 2013). From a change leadership perspective, creating and owning a vision for how to lead others through a difficult change fits into the mold of what a leader, not a manager, does. Inspiring others through words and actions and influencing a group to see things differently, are both traits of a leader. A manager would be focused on the tasks that need to occur to move people from point A to point B, which looks and feels like change management, not change leadership. Both have their place, and both need to occur, but it is important to differentiate between the two.

Understand leadership styles is also very important for this discussion. One can be a solid leader for their organization, but their leadership style may not fit within the company culture.

There are several types of defined leadership styles: Democratic, Autocratic, Laissez-Faire, Strategic, Transformational, Transactional, Coach-Style, and Bureaucratic (Becker, 2020). Each of these styles has pros and cons, and each can be utilized in a successful manner. A competent and successful leader of today can constantly flex their style to use pieces or parts of each of these defined styles. Becker (2020) defines democratic leadership as a leader who makes decisions inclusively with their team's input. *Autocratic* is the opposite of *democratic*, where the leader makes decisions on their own, without input from others (Becker, 2020). *Laissez-Faire* can be defined as hands-off, let them do as they please leadership style (Becker, 2020). *Strategic leadership* is effective, handles executive tasks that impact the company, but can limit the number of direct reports due to the responsibility (Becker, 2020). *Transformational* is as it sounds, always transforming or making improvements (Becker, 2020). This leader might be a nightmare for an employee who is averse to change. *Transactional leadership* is a task-based, incentive-based leader (Becker, 2020). *Coach-style leadership* is more akin to the nurturing and strong team mindset (Becker, 2020). Finally, *bureaucratic leadership* is defined as the leader that listens to others on the team, but more than likely rejects the employee's idea and goes with their own (Becker, 2020).

While there are several leadership styles that define leaders in the workplace, it is the leader's ability to adapt and recognize when they need to flex their style that is important. It is valuable to examine the situation shared earlier in the paper about the IT department that was going through a reorganization. If the leader is typically autocratic, they will not seek the thoughts and input from others on the team. If the leader is democratic by nature, they will seek to be highly inclusive and take into consideration everyone's opinions and thoughts. Given the nature of a department reorganization, it is likely that a successful leader will need to merge

these two styles if they want their change to be successfully adopted long-term. Specifically, the leader might start by gathering input from their team. This helps the leader to uncover any blind spots or gaps in their own logic. The leader could then share the outcomes via a few versions of the draft organizational chart. Next, the leader understands that ultimately, the new org structure is theirs to own. The leader is accountable. There must be some autocratic nature to their process because they are the ultimate decision maker given their role. What might be lost between the lines with this example is that by flexing their approach to the situation, the change leader has built trust, given the perception that everyone's input is welcomed, and created a circle of influence. All these traits are extremely important, as we previously defined the differences between change management and change leadership, as well as the differences between managers and leaders in general.

One leadership style that was omitted above is the *Servant Leader*. Servant leaders are often described as being: "people-first and believe that when team members feel personally and professionally fulfilled, they're more effective and more likely to produce great work regularly. Because of their emphasis on employee satisfaction and collaboration, they tend to achieve higher levels of respect" (Indeed, 2020). Think about the impact this style has on the working professional. Imagine that you are a software developer, working for a Fortune 500 company. You are great at your job, and enjoy being a part of the company's success...what might be most important to you? Is it the feeling of accomplishment? Perhaps it is, but likely the feeling of being empowered, trusted, appreciated, heard, and respected are high on a professional's list. Traits of servant leadership include the ability to motivate the team, showing personal care, constant encouragement and engagement, and commitment to professional development of team members (Indeed, 2020). The benefits of these traits are clear. Employee morale is high, they are

productive, engaged, and will work hard because they feel a deep, respected connection with their leader. Tying this to earlier points in the paper, cynicism has been tied to skepticism, unfair treatment, exclusion in decision making, lack of connection, and lack of trust. The servant leader is a great leadership style to apply in an organizational change leadership role. Their approach can reduce or eliminate organizational cynicism simply through the way in which they connect and communicate with their team.

Servant leadership, often referred to as altruistic leadership, demonstrates behaviors such as: “empowerment, humility, courage, and accountability which are vital in shaping employee perceptions of inclusion” (Das, 2019, p. 15). A leader with these traits often places their own self-interests aside for the betterment of the individual they are leading. This leadership style drives inclusion through focusing on employee development. It has a complete understanding of change management and specifically the people side of change. In terms of courage, a servant leader most often has their people’s, or direct reports’, best interests in mind. This might mean they forgo aligning with other peers and leaders in the company because they have their finger on the pulse of the individual contributor. Through this process, the servant leader can place accountabilities on their direct reports because there is a deep foundation of personal connection, respect, appreciation of roles and effort, and ultimately inclusion through decision making.

All of this is interesting, but how does it relate to cynicism to change? In the research shared earlier in the paper, it was clear that cynicism is driven from a disbelief or distrust that employees have with their management staff. Organizational climate, lack of empathy, and lack of inclusivity all play a role in undermining a change leader’s ability to enact meaningful change for their team or organization. The servant leader’s strengths dovetail nicely in counteracting these issues in an organization. For example, if an organization has a poor climate or culture due

to a top down, hierarchical approach that does not share information openly, it increases cynicism at all levels. A servant leader seeks to be inclusive in their decision making. They recognize the importance and impact that including the team's input has on morale, while creating a personal connection along the way. The servant leader also understands that showing empathy during a tough change is impactful to the mental wellbeing of the individuals they lead. However, a leader's empathy will seem empty or disingenuous if they have not first taken the time to create meaningful, trusting, and personal relationships with those employees. If a leader lacks empathy for how change impacts individuals (job cuts, salary cuts, reorganizations), it creates higher cynicism to change. With that said, there are times when cynicism to change will occur regardless of the change leader's level of empathy because of how the change is impacting an employee. We must recognize that leaders are also dealing with the change and must find a way to move past their own hesitations and anxieties as they lead their team through the change. Therefore, the servant leadership style is such a great fit for a change leader. Their abilities, sensibilities, and desire to place the needs and wellbeing of those they lead over their own are obvious. It is these qualities that create a climate of belonging, a safe space to respectfully challenge, and leads to the full participation of their team. All these aspects serve to reduce skepticism and cynicism to change.

Can the rate and pace of change lead to additional cynicism? If you were to look at examples of success stories and failed makeover attempts by CEOs, you will find a mixed bag of responses. If the makeover attempt failed, then the change was too much and too fast. If the makeover was successful, then the right amount of change was introduced at the right pace. The truth is: "transformations and turnarounds should be neither too fast nor too slow; they must be just right" (Schrage, 2012, p. 4). A change leader can rationalize their approach regardless of the

outcome, but what is often missed is the perspective of the person the change is impacting. For example, a change leader can be both ready and willing to introduce change to their department, but are the employees of the department ready and willing to change? Perhaps they have already been through a large amount of change and they are experiencing change burnout. Conversely, maybe the department's employees are so used to rapid change that they quickly embrace and realize the positive aspects the change will bring. In either scenario, the change leader must be able to read the room, so to speak.

The employee's readiness for change directly impacts and plays a role in their level of cynicism towards change. Therefore, it is vitally important for a change leader to understand where their employees are in their change journey. If the employees are overwhelmed by too much change too fast, it would be prudent for the change leader to recognize this and slow the rate of change. If the employees are quickly adapting to change and appear to be motivated by the positive nature that the changes bring, the change leader can press ahead and drive additional change, effectively increasing the rate and pace of change. "More often than not, the real speed challenge most leaderships face is quickly determining whether they're trying to better follow, lead, or transform the customers and clients they have" (Schrage, 2012, p. 9). This is an important distinction as it relates to cynicism and change. As a change leader, one must be able to identify and adapt their strategy, being nimble enough to adjust mid-change based on the response of their employees to the proposed change. Should they follow the lead of their employees, essentially reading their verbal and nonverbal cues in terms of what to do next? Should they simply lead and do what they feel is best for the organization, regardless what the impact might be to the staff they lead? Or, should the change leader's focus be on transformation

for transformation's sake? It is possible that the change leader was brought in to enact change at a rate and pace that the organization needs because the organization is losing market share.

That point brings the topic of servant leadership back to the forefront. As transformational change is occurring at an organization, the role of a servant leader is even more pivotal to the success of the change. The servant leader's qualities lend themselves to reading the room, keeping their finger on the pulse of those they lead, and ultimately helps to ensure that the rate and pace of change are 'just right' for most employees. It is worth noting that a change leader will likely experience a mixture of 'ready for change' versus 'burn out' due to change. Other change leadership styles can be successful but the servant leadership style is more equipped to understand the nuances that the impacts of the change are having on the employees. As stated earlier, the empathy and inclusivity that a servant leader demonstrates while leading change helps to proactively reduce cynicism to change because they are likely being transparent and open about the forthcoming changes. They are more likely to recognize the impact the rate and pace the change is having on those they lead because they have a personal connection established that has led to greater trust and belief in that leader. It is that trust and belief that will allow employees to feel comfortable coming forward and share how they truly feel about the changes that are being implemented. It is this dual transparency between the leader and the employee that will help avoid skepticism and cynicism, even though the company will always prioritize their bottom line. Transparency will allow the change leader to govern the right rate and pace of the changes they are leading for the organization. Whether the change is minor or transformational, the open communication will help the leader figure out if they should follow (listen) or lead at any given moment.

Change Strategies to Mitigate Resistance

Resistance to change plays a large role in cynicism. The more resisters there are and the greater that swell of those voices become, the more likely it is that cynicism will spawn. It is this resistance that must be curbed and mitigated by the change leader early in the process of change leadership, or the change will be less likely to succeed. There are a multitude of change strategies that can be implemented to help plan for and proactively reduce resistance to change. For the sake of simple comparison, this paper will focus on two of those change models: ADKAR (Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, Reinforcement), and Kotter's 8-Step Change Model. "Change is often a complex and difficult process – and it's inevitable. The most commonly cited reason for failure is problems with the people side of change. Yet organizations often invest more in the technical side of change than in leading impacted people through times of change" (Prosci, 2021, p. 4). This relates back to the earlier statements in this paper that successful change leadership requires connectedness to people. The focus of the people side of change cannot be understated at any point during a change initiative. Both the ADKAR and Kotter model address the people side of change, yet they do so in different ways.

Table A1 in the Appendix explains each ADKAR element and the factors influencing the success related to each element. In terms of ADKAR, the awareness phase is just that, awareness. It is the proactive, first phase of the model that builds awareness to the change that is being proposed by the organization (Prosci, 2021). This of course has a direct focus on the individuals that will be experiencing the change or that will be impacted by the change. If this step is skipped or glazed over, the employees or staff will be unaware of the change and the change will likely fail. This first phase typically includes change management activities such as

consistent talking points as to why the change is needed and the timing of the change. A solid awareness phase will set the stage for the second phase, desire.

Desire in the ADKAR model relates to the desire of the employees to support the given change (Prosci, 2021). A key component of the desire phase is the ability of the change leader to clearly articulate the WIIFM, or “what’s in it for me”, message. This entails sharing the impacts the change will have on the organization, what the employee’s role is in that change, and how the change will benefit the employee. These first two stages ultimately serve to set the stage to drive excitement if the change is positive, or simply educate in the case of a difficult change that will negatively impact an organization. Relating back to earlier statements, cynicism is measured via several factors which include understanding the reason for change, commitment to change, problem importance, management competence, and intent to resist. Awareness and desire help to reduce the likelihood of resistance and cynicism because these phases address each of these factors. Awareness and desire frame up the reason for change, describe how the change benefits or impacts the individual (driving commitment), and transparently describes the problem’s importance. The third phase, knowledge, addresses the ‘how’. In other words, how will the change leader or company roll out the change to the individuals and organization. This phase is important because it will provide the blueprint for the path forward, bringing all the individuals along for the journey. This phase touches on new tools or processes that are being implemented as part of the proposed change, therefore this phase often sheds light on factors that influence behaviors, norms, roles, responsibilities, and expectations (Prosci, 2021).

The fourth phase, the culmination of awareness, desire and knowledge of ADKAR is ability. The proactive nature of the first three phases, if done properly, will start to pay off during the ability phase of the model. Individuals at this point should fully understand why and when

the change is happening, how it impacts them, what is in it for them, and have the knowledge of the processes or tools. Ability provides additional training, hands-on experiences, coaching, feedback, measuring of adoption of the change, and reporting of success metrics (Prosci, 2021). In other words, it begs the question, do the individuals and organization have what they need to be successful as part of the overall change initiative? The change is fully rolled out and individuals and teams are actively using the new tools or processes. There may still be resisters and cynics, but if the first four phases were done well, those individuals should be few and far between. If you are a change leader, this phase is a great place to enact cynicism measurements through surveys. Understanding where the individuals and teams are at in the change curve will help aid in the final phase, which is reinforcement of the change. Reinforcement can be easily overlooked or forgotten about. Much of the hard work has been completed and change is in place but losing sight of reinforcement can lead to short adoption behaviors and ultimately the failure of the change initiative. In fact, reinforcement increases the likelihood that a change will be continued long-term and often includes recognition, appreciation, reminders, celebrations, performance measures, and feedback (Prosci, 2021). Lack of investment in this final phase will result in throw away efforts to enact the change. If this happens, it is possible the change will fail, and the individuals and teams will likely become even more resistant to future change efforts. This relates back to the rate and pace of change covered earlier in the paper. If an organization is moving too quickly, change leaders may not feel they have time to reinforce the change, and move on too quickly to the next change that is in queue. This, again, has a detrimental impact on the individuals and teams going through the change process.

The ADKAR change model can be described as an individual change model in some respects because each phase truly does focus on the individual going through the change: “at its

foundation, the ADKAR model is a powerful framework for understanding how change can happen with a single individual. The ADKAR model can be used personally, by viewing a change you are working through and identifying where and why you may be struggling. It can be used to help evaluate change with other people” (Taylor, 2021, p. 3). Knowing that change inherently impacts individuals and that the people side of change is incredibly important to the overall success of change, the ADKAR model clearly provides benefits to change leaders and organizations. As described earlier, ADKAR is very easy to use and provides common language for company leaders and teams to utilize (Prosci, 2021). Consistency in approach can provide benefits to an organization as well. Rolling out changes by utilizing a common model like ADKAR can drive confidence at all levels of an organization, including at the individual level. This is because all employees in the organization understand what to expect with each phase. They gain confidence in management’s ability to enact change through consistency in approach, consistency in expectations, and consistency in communication. If an organization couples the ADKAR approach with a servant leader, the change could result in less resistance, less cynicism, and greater success. A servant leader can describe awareness and desire for a change by placing themselves in the shoes of those they lead versus solely focusing on the desired outcomes of the proposed change.

While there are several change leadership models and practices, many theories have begun with John Kotter (Kotter, 2012). Kotter’s 8-step process for leading change can also be used to lead individuals and organizations through the change process. Kotter’s 8-step process has similarities and differences as compared to the ADKAR model. Table A2 in the Appendix outlines Kotter’s 8-step process, including the stages, as well as the actions required, and pitfalls associated with each stage. This paper will dive into Kotter’s 8 Step process next.

The first step is creating urgency. The thought process behind creating urgency, as it relates to the change, is to inspire and jump start the need for the change. This typically includes a transparent conversation with those likely impacted by the change. Kotter (2012) believes that if people in the organization begin talking about the pending change, the urgency will build upon itself. Taking this a step further: “Kotter highlights that in order for change to be successful, 75 percent of the company’s management has to buy into the change” (Kotter, 2012, p. 9). In fact, great care must be taken during step one of the Kotter process to build this urgency and gain buy-in from management, or the change will likely not be a success.

The second step of the Kotter process is to form a powerful coalition. This entails bringing people together across the organization that are both influential and able to help lead the change that is being implemented. This would include those the change leader feels should be stakeholders, ensuring the coalition has a healthy mix of cross departmental representation (Kotter, 2012). Building a coalition is advantageous because it expands the change leaders center of influence across the organization. In essence, the change leader starts transforming from an army of one to army of many through key, influential thought leaders in the company. For these reasons, this step is important. A coalition of powerful and influential organization members will be more likely to push and enact change.

The third step in Kotter’s process is to create a vision for the change. This vision can help the change leader and their coalition to: “help everyone understand why you’re asking to do something. When people see for themselves what you’re trying to achieve, then the directives they’re given tend to make more sense” (Kotter, 2012, p. 15). As a change leader, this step might include the creating of a vision statement or summary of what the future looks like as a result of the change that is pending implementation. Another important aspect of step three is the creation

of an elevator speech that the change leader's coalition can articulate to others in the organization. Ensuring everyone is utilizing consistent talking points and can easily describe the vision of the change is incredibly important because if the coalition is providing misaligned information to the masses, the masses can become confused, skeptical, and yes, cynical towards the change.

Step four of the Kotter process is the communication of the vision. In fact: "What you do with your vision after you create it will determine your success. Your message will probably have strong competition from day-to-day communications within the company, so you need to communicate it frequently and powerfully, and embed it within everything you do" (Kotter, 2012, p. 18). This is where an organizational change management action plan will help drive success. Clearly laying out when, how, and what will be communicated to the organization will help with consistency and frequency while also aiding in keeping the change vision fresh in the minds of the employees. These communications should address resistance, concerns and misconceptions, and discuss training needs all while transparently highlighting the vision of the change being implemented.

The fifth step of Kotter's 8-step process is the removal of obstacles. The change leader, should have effectively created a vision, wrapped it with an organization-wide strategy, and consistently delivered on that message. No matter how clearly defined and well delivered the first four steps are, there will be barriers and obstacles to deal with. Kotter recommends continually checking for barriers: "Removing obstacles can empower the people you need to execute your vision, and it can help the change move forward" (Kotter, 2012, p. 24). A change leader's job during step five is to ultimately identify the resistance, whether that is people or process, and remove that that resistance. This might entail an increase in communication across

the organization or simply meeting one-on-one with an employee to address perspectives and fears regarding the change. The key to the removal of obstacles during change leadership is to act quickly or the resistance will spread, creating the potential for widespread cynicism (Kotter, 2012). While journeying through this step, it is also advantageous to recognize and celebrate those who are embracing the change and helping to make it a success. This proactive behavior will help drive the belief that the change is both positive and welcomed across the organization.

As the change heads into step six, the focus shifts to creating and celebrating short-term wins: “Nothing motivates more than success. Give your company a taste of victory early in the change process. Within a short timeframe, you’ll want to have some quick wins that your staff can see” (Kotter, 2012, p. 26). These smaller, obtainable, and tangible wins will drive excitement and encourage resisters to jump the fence and join others that are embracing the change. Stacking several quick wins in the change process can only help lead to future successes as the change journey continues. This can have benefits for the current change that is being implemented, as well as future changes that have not started yet because the change leader is following a process that encourages and celebrates wins. The change leader is demonstrating that even the small wins are recognized and that it is an important aspect to the overall picture. It helps everyone feel like they are contributing to the success of the organization.

Step seven involves building on the change that is being implemented. Many organizations implement change successfully, but then swiftly move on to the next change for the organization. This can lead to issues with long-term adoption of the change or outright failure of the change because it has not taken roots in the organization: “Real change runs deep. Quick wins are only the beginning of what needs to be done to achieve long-term change” (Kotter, 2012, p. 29). Without continued focus to ensure the change becomes a company or culture norm,

the change is destined to fail, which brings the discussion to step eight of Kotter's eight step process. This step is all about 'stickability', for lack of a better term. Before a change leader moves on to their next change challenge, they should be working hard to ensure their current change is still being communicated at all levels of the organization. They should be sharing the vision, progress, values, and publicly recognizing the wins and contributions of key stakeholders (Kotter, 2012).

Comparing the Hiatt's ADKAR model to Kotter's 8-step process, it is clear that deep similarities between the two exist, but there are also limitations and differences to explore. At a high-level, the ADKAR model's focus is with individual change management, whereas Kotter's 8-step process focuses on organizational change leadership. Two key words of importance that this paper has touched on previously is the difference between change management and change leadership. If the ADKAR model focuses on individual change management, it is providing a framework or a tool to enact change at the individual level. In theory, it is producing a tool for a change leader to utilize as part of their process. By comparison, Kotter's 8-step process is focused on change leadership. Those are two completely different areas of focus. One is a process and a framework – ADKAR – and the other is leading change – Kotter (Das, 2019).

Limitations for Hiatt's ADKAR model includes its inability to differentiate between incremental change as well as step change. It also fails to call out and recognize roles and responsibilities outside the individual's roles, i.e. the role of leadership. ADKAR also fails to highlight a leader's need to consider the emotional side of people change. Finally, ADKAR does not consider the broader, organizational focus of change leadership, but rather focuses on the individual change (Das, 2019). While these limitations are significant, it is important to realize that the ADKAR model holds value for individuals and organizations. Even as a change

management tool, ADKAR provides a platform or vehicle to discuss change that is occurring. This is better than not having change management at all. Given the rate and pace of change in today's business world, the ADKAR model has a place and it provides value. This paper has focused quite a bit of attention on the people side of change, discussing at length how a change leader must understand that people matter. Their emotions, reactions, cynicism, skepticism, and mental wellbeing all matter if a change is to be successful. ADKAR focuses on these aspects at the individual level, but it does not necessarily provide the change leader with anything more than a process or a tool to utilize. In that sense, the ADKAR model can help "steer change management undertakings such as communication, training, sponsorship and coaching. It helps to diagnose a floundering change by administering an ADKAR appraisal" (DAS, 2019, p. 268). This statement, again, drives home the point that the ADKAR model is a tool for managing change, not leading change.

Kotter's 8-step process also has limitations: "Some change scholar-practitioners contend that Kotter's change model is rigid inasmuch as he emphasized the need for the eight phases to be executed sequentially and that overlapping would lead to failure" (Das, 2019, p. 268). Implementing a change in its entirety while following Kotter's eight sequential steps can be difficult when considering that several changes could likely be occurring in parallel. An organization or change leader may have to lead multiple eight step change processes simultaneously. This can quickly become overwhelming and unwieldy for the change leader. Another limitation identified was the secrecy involved in steps one and four (Das, 2019). This conflicts with points made earlier in this paper that focused on the importance of truth and transparency as it relates to eroding cynicism and skepticism.

Both the ADKAR model and Kotter 8-step process can be used to successfully enact change at an organization. They both touch on key aspects to consider and monitor. While one focuses on the individual people side of change, the other focuses on leading change broadly across an organization. Combining pieces of these change models together might provide a change leader with all the tools needed to manage and lead change across an organization. By combining the individual aspects of ADKAR with the step by step process of Kotter's model, a change leader can both keep their ear to the ground to manage individual change and lead change holistically. When considering how resistance and cynicism can grow, a change leader can think about awareness and desire. When a change leader considers how the vision of the change will impact the organization from a broad perspective, they will utilize the steps outlined in the Kotter process. Both, used in conjunction, can help deter cynicism to change at the individual and organizational level.

Summary

This paper has taken a deep dive into cynicism to change and how that cynicism is born at the individual level. Change is constant. That statement has never been more true than present day. In fact, the rate of change has only increased in the past twenty years to the point where change is happening at an exponential rate (Talin, 2021). Technology is at the heart of that exponential change. It is seen and felt in every industry including manufacturing, distribution, insurance, service, and beyond. The recent pandemic has only pushed change on people and organizations at a faster pace. It is easy to see examples of this when we look at companies like Amazon who can deliver a package to your doorstep within 24 hours of an online order. Behind that 24-hour delivery is improved technology and distribution processes. While it is extremely exciting to live during a time where the world experiences such positive and rapid change, there are impacts these changes have to individuals that must be taken into consideration.

At the individual level, people are dealing with change in their career, change at home, change in their personal shopping habits, and change in just about every aspect of their lives. Technology is impacting many, if not all, of people's interactions. Cell phones can now provide face to face calls, our vehicles can drive themselves to any destination with a few clicks on a smart screen in the vehicle, and drones can deliver packages to our doorsteps. At work, change is happening at a swift pace for most organizations. If companies are not keeping up with the pace of change, they are facing dire results. Look no further than Sears, JC Penny, Toys R Us, and many other brick and mortar retailers. Look no further than Family Video, Blockbuster, and Planet Video. Each of these companies missed an opportunity to change with the times and it cost them their business. Successful retailers like Walmart and Amazon have adapted and take advantage of the latest technologies to offer online shopping with delivery curbside or in-store

pickup. Because they were ahead of the curve, they not only survived the global pandemic of 2020, they profited from the experience.

These are great examples of how organizational change can impact a business' solvency. They are also great examples of how important change leadership is at the organizational level. Again, lost in the mix is the people side of change. Amongst all the change that is occurring, it is easy to glaze over how these changes create anxiety, stress, mental barriers, frustration, skepticism, and cynicism towards change. In many cases, change leaves individuals behind, or at the very least, ignores the importance of meeting individuals where they are at in their change journey. Change leadership is needed at the individual and organizational level to ensure the emotional side of change is being factored into the change planning process. There are a few change specific models that change leaders can use to help drive success. This paper explored and contrasted Hiatt's ADKAR model and Kotter's 8-step process. In the end, the most important aspect of enacting change is people. A change leader must learn how to lead people through the change process. Reflecting on all the change that is occurring in the world, whether that is in the service, manufacturing, or distribution space, people are being forced through change. During that process, individuals can become cynics to change because they may feel lost or powerless in that process. They may be cynical because their leader has not done a good job of explaining the need for change and how that change will impact the organization.

Taking a deeper look into this specific scenario, we can focus on a company like Blockbuster. As an executive team, Blockbuster missed an opportunity to pivot and change with the times. Once the benchmark for home video rentals, their fall was quick and dramatic, being replaced by the advent of streaming movies via Netflix or the quick and painless rental via Red Box. Simply stated, their business model became outdated and irrelevant within a relatively short

window of time. There are a few reasons this happened to Blockbuster and companies like them. One, as stated earlier, they didn't initially recognize the need for change. Using the Kotter change process, they lacked urgency for the need and importance of change that was occurring in their industry. As their industry shifted to streaming movies and quick rental opportunities, Blockbuster could have cashed in easily by creating their own streaming services. They could have also created kiosk type of user experiences across the company, eliminating or reducing their brick and mortar footprint. What happened instead was their downfall, and the rise of competitors in their space like Netflix. Blockbuster is a microcosm of what failure to change can do for an organization in today's world of believing that change happens now and it happens fast.

Earlier in the paper, as part of the literature review, a Romanian case study was shared. The participants were subjected to change initiatives such as layoffs, salary cuts, reorganization, and lack of job security. This serves as a perfect example of the type of change that Blockbuster was reluctant to make because impacts such as reorganization and layoffs were likely to occur if they shifted their model. Instead, their decision to not change ultimately led to the closure of all but one location in the United States and impacted the careers of thousands. An alternative could have occurred if Blockbuster chose to create their own streaming service, pivoted to reduce brick and mortar stores, and implemented kiosks, creating a user experience and modern business model that would likely have been sustained for decades. While the motives to not change may never be known, Blockbuster refused to enact business saving change for their company and employees. Perhaps it was lack of urgency, lack of awareness, reluctance to enact change on their employees, or simply ignorance to the changing world around them. The point is change is happening at a rapid pace. Individuals and organizations must become more comfortable and

accepting of that change. The importance of change leadership in an organization has never been more important. Without it, organizations like Blockbuster will continue to fail and serve as a reminder that the role of both change management and change leadership are incredibly important. Ensuring that individuals within those organizations are being included, recognized, and appreciated is just as important.

Cynicism to change is driven at the individual level. It is born from lack of connectedness to leadership. It is driven from lack of belief in leadership. It can grow quickly and erode the ability for change to be successful. The importance of leadership cannot be overstated. This paper spent considerable time discussing the role of servant leadership as part of the change process. The qualities and traits that a servant leader applies to the individuals they lead are incredibly important because the servant leader can empathize with those they lead. They are taking the time to connect on a personal level, listening actively to the thoughts and concerns of those they lead, and tend to be inclusive in their decision-making process. This is important because variables such as not understanding the importance of change, management competence, and understanding the reason for change drive cynicism. In this sense, a change leader can utilize Hiatt's ADKAR model to ensure that the individual is both aware and understands why the change is happening and how important the change is. The change leader can help raise the desires for support for the change through these efforts and reduce cynicism at the individual level.

In a world of constant change, the change leader can improve cynicism through a few avenues mentioned as part of this paper. First, proactive measurements can be instituted to baseline where the individual or organization are in terms of their openness for additional change initiatives. This can be accomplished through a questionnaire (Table 1) or survey that highlights

key topics such as leader competency, anxiety, skepticism, anger, and company goal alignment. This baseline survey can then be contrasted and compared multiple times throughout a major change lifecycle so the change leader can continue to stay connected with those they are leading. It is through this survey that the change leader can begin to recognize themes or areas for improvement that will help to mitigate growing cynicism. Often times, major changes impact not just the individuals but the organization as a whole: “Understanding the reason for which some employees can resist change can have major financial implications for the organization” (Grama & Todericiu, 2016, p. 47). Therefore, the information gathered via the survey or questionnaire will be incredibly insightful for the change leader as they navigate their team and organization through the change process.

A large aspect of success change hinges on company culture, or the company’s climate. Specifically, a company climate that is transparent, truthful, forthright, inclusive, and genuine has a better chance of enacting successful change than a company culture that lacks these qualities. While a company cannot always be completely transparent, it can most certainly frame up the reason for change and share why change needs to occur. This speaks to an individual’s belief that the company has their best interest in mind, and if they trust their leader. This paper made the case for the type of leader that can best cultivate and thrive, connecting with those they lead on multiple levels. An even stronger case for change leadership, not change management makes sense. A strong change leader, steeped in servant leadership, can help create an organizational climate that others enjoy working in and tend to follow. Because of this, that change leader will likely be more successful, and so will the organization.

Building a strong company culture that is open to change is not an easy task. This requires more than just one change leader that believes in the importance of people-first change

leadership. It requires a coalition of change leaders at multiple levels that buy into this type of culture. The Kotter change process places value in creating a coalition of change leaders that can embrace, speak to, and help lead change for the organization. While it is common for pockets of resistors and cynics to exist in an organization, strong situational change leadership can mitigate or eliminate these elements through strong interpersonal connections that creates the foundation for trusting relationships across the organization. For an organization that does not have a great company culture that embraces change, there are ways to start building that culture. It starts with vision: “A vision should consider what the company looks like from every angle. How are employees working differently? What are our customers saying? How do our executives lead the organization? What characteristics describe the organization?” (Chavez, 2019, p. 5). If individuals can clearly understand the purpose of the change, they will likely buy into it and connect the dots in terms of how their role plays into that change. This, in turn, will help reduce resistance and individuals will embrace change knowing its impact for the organization (Chavez, 2019).

Another aspect of growing good company culture that is open to change, is fearless leadership. While we have touched on the servant leader, the transformational leader also has traits that can positively impact individuals as they lead through change. These leaders “encourage, inspire and motivate employees to innovate and create change that will help grow and shape the future success of the company. In fact, research has shown that transformational leadership is strongly related to increasing employee’ commitment to change” (Chavez, 2019, p. 9). If an individual feels heard, has been communicated to in an open and transparent way, and has been inspired by a change leader that is encouraging and supportive, the likelihood of successfully implementing long-term, positive change is greater. Finally, organizational agility is

an aspect that will build a company culture that is ready for change. This means that the company should look to “embed change management into every fiber of the organization and your organization will start to increase its capability to change, and change quickly” (Chavez, 2019, p. 10). Delving a bit deeper into this, Millennials account for 35 percent of the workforce, and they are the least fearful of change of the generations that currently make up the workforce (Chavez, 2019). Coupling the make-up of the workforce with the constant need for change in today’s work environment, it is extremely clear that change leadership is table stakes for organizations that wish to remain viable in the marketplace. The key to creating an organization that is nimble, embraces change, and lacks cynicism to change is to completely embed change management into the fabric of the company culture. It must become the norm. It must be accepted that change is happening, constantly, and the organization will be better because of it.

This concept is no easy feat for today’s companies, nor is it easy for individuals. With change ever present in all aspects of life, individuals can easily become overwhelmed or exhausted by the change. The cynicism that results can be paralyzing and crush any thought of implementing a change successfully. With a fully embedded change management approach, baseline measurements to understand where the individuals are in terms of openness to change, and having the right type of change leader in place, organizations are able to overcome all the noise that exists and focus on the right things, which are the people. It always comes back to people. In fact, “listening to your people is one of the best things an organization can do. When you begin to shift to a people centric mindset, you begin to unlock limitless potential. After all, people are the greatest asset” (Chavez, 2019, p. 7). It is this focus on people and the emotional side of change that must always be front and center for the change leader and the organization.

By continually meeting the individuals where they are at versus talking past them, the leader will create trust, foster belief, and demonstrate competency in front of those they lead.

Employee satisfaction is an aspect of cynicism that can be proactively handled by an organization. Employee satisfaction is driven by ten factors: appreciation for their work, good relationships with colleagues, good work-life balance, good relationships with superiors, company's financial stability, learning and career development, job security, attractive salary, feeling challenge at work, and the company's values (Morgan, 2014). These ten factors must always be taken into consideration and managed by the change leader. If an individual feels under-appreciated, does not feel their salary is competitive, does not align with company values, and lacks work-life balance, there is a good chance they will naturally be cynical to any change being implemented. These individuals often feel disenfranchised and disconnected on multiple levels, leading to resistance and cynicism. Again, the importance of the baseline questionnaire and follow-up survey will allow the change leader to keep tabs on individual behavior or pattern changes that might be occurring. It provides an opportunity to face issues head on while also demonstrating an ability to connect personally while showing empathy.

On the job satisfaction is a very important factor to consider when looking at reasons for why a company culture is not open to change. The cynicism that is produced by individuals who are not satisfied can spread like a cancer and lead to an army of resisters and cynics. The change leader's job suddenly becomes even harder trying to change the tide of negativity that erodes any chance of rolling out positive change for the organization. A factor that must be considered in today's workplace is "that the balance of power is shifting away (or at least is starting to) from organizations and towards employees. Today, we have quite a few choices to consider and several opportunities to evaluate when exploring how to make a living" (Morgan, 2014, p. 8).

This must be front of mind for change leaders and organizations alike, knowing that if there are unsatisfied and cynical individuals in the organization, that mindset will spread. It is this spread of cynicism that will create barriers to change.

In a world of constant change, individuals are looking for organizations that “create desirable and engaging place to work” (Morgan, 2014, p. 9). Individuals that do not feel this engagement are more likely to feel disconnected from the goals and direction of the organization. As change occurs at a rapid pace, these individuals can quickly become skeptical and cynical of the change that is being proposed by the change leader and the organization. This paper has touched on several factors that can help a change leader overcome that cynicism to change, including leadership style, communication strategies, and change models to utilize while introducing change across the organization. There are ways that a change leader can proactively introduce meaningful measurements and feedback into their organizational change plan that will both detect and mitigate cynicism to change.

A change leader’s biggest obstacle to implementing a successful change is people. This has been established and recognized. While a change model such ADKAR can be utilized to manage the change at the individual level, there are simple tools that can be used at the beginning and then throughout the change process that further connect the change leader to the individual’s needs and desires. As previously mentioned, job satisfaction centers around the needs and desires of the individual at the organization. A simple way to take a step back and look at this would be to place oneself in the individual’s shoes. Am I happy in my current role? Am I engaged in daily activities with my peers? Do I align to the goals and culture of the organization? Do I feel empowered to do my job? Does my leader appreciate what I do? Do I feel appropriately compensated for what I do? Do I have a personal connection with my leader? Does my leader

care about me as a person? Do I feel my leader is competent enough to lead? All these questions relate to people leadership and seemingly have nothing to do with the specific change initiative that the leader is attempting to roll out. In reality, nothing could be further from the truth. These questions have everything to do with rolling out successful change because they have everything to do with people and the emotional side of change leadership.

Change leadership at the individual level is wildly important. A change leader that is connected and tuned into those they lead will have a clear understanding of how their people are doing emotionally. The leader will understand if they are ready for change or if they are exhausted from too much change. As discussed in this paper, questionnaires and surveys can be used to first baseline where individuals are at in their change journey. This baseline must be heeded because moving forward with change when individuals or a group are clearly stating they are not ready will lead to failure. This cynicism survey can provide the vehicle for open and honest communication between a leader and their employee. This can in turn create a deeper level of trust between the two individuals, which leads to the leader's ability to read body language and tone as they recognize the emotional changes individuals are dealing with. To some, this concept is vague. It is touchy-feely. Some leaders struggle immensely with the concept of connecting on a personal level at work. They think they are present to complete tasks and enact change for the organization. They feel that change is going to happen regardless of how individuals feel about it, therefore, resistance and cynicism will always be there. Nothing could be further from the truth. A successful change leader that connects, appreciates, and cultivates trust with their people while showing empathy for the changes they are experiencing is the leader of the present and future. Ignoring what people are going through will only serve to

alienate and drive deeper skepticism of the leader's motives and agenda. This creates cynicism towards change.

Cynicism towards change can be proactively addressed with specific cynicism to change scales mentioned earlier in this paper. The Likert-type scale is a great example of a tool that a change leader can implement in any change model, including the ADKAR and Kotter models. Cynicism to change can occur at both the individual and organizational level, and both can have financial impacts to the organization. The Blockbuster example is an interesting take on how cynicism to change, and not willing to recognize that change is needed, can impact the financial solvency of a company. This paper took a deeper look at the origins of cynicism and how places like a federal aviation agency experienced high levels of self-interest, which led to cynicism. It also considered research of two public sector organizations that went through layoff and reorganization situations that can easily lead to greater cynicism to change. While there are many ways to approach and learn about why cynicism to change occurs, the most important factor to bear in mind is that people's emotions and wellbeing are being impacted. A change leader must always consider this when dealing with cynicism to change. Analyzing why the individual is resisting sounds simple but in reality, it can be very complex. Applying a Likert scale to the conversation as a data point can help the change leader determine exactly where gaps are occurring and why they exist, providing an opportunity to adjust their change leadership plan to factor in the data they have collected.

The rate and pace of change in personal and professional situations will only continue to grow as the world continues to become interconnected in all things. This highlights the importance of a change leader's role in an organization. Without change management, change leadership, and personal connections to those they are leading, change is likely to fail for the

individuals and for the organization as a whole. If change fails, or if the need for change is not recognized, the impacts can be catastrophic for an organization. Skepticism can be averted, resistance to change can be managed, and cynicism to change can be avoided, all through proper change leadership at the individual and organizational level. While change can be big and scary, if led properly, it can provide wonderfully positive results for the individuals that make up an organization. It is the individuals who are the lifeblood of the organization, and a change leader that recognizes this will ensure they are bringing individuals along for the change journey, addressing and avoiding cynicism to change along the way.

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Appendix

Table A1- ADKAR Elements

ADKAR ELEMENT	FACTORS INFLUENCING SUCCESS
<p>Awareness of the need for change</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A person's view of the current state • How a person perceives problems • Credibility of the sender of awareness messages • Circulation of misinformation or rumors • Contestability of the reasons for change
<p>Desire to support and participate in the change</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The nature of the change (what the change is and how it will impact each person) • The organizational or environmental context for the change (his or her perception of the organization or environment that is subject to change) • Each individual's personal situation • What motivates a person (those intrinsic motivators that are unique to an individual)
<p>Knowledge of how to change</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current knowledge base of an individual • The capacity of the person to gain additional knowledge • Resources available for education and training • Access to or existence of the required knowledge
<p>Ability to implement required skills and behavior</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychological blocks • Individual ability • Intellectual capability • The time available to develop the needed skills • The availability of resources to support the development of new abilities
<p>Reinforcement to sustain the change</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The degree to which the reinforcement is meaningful and specific to the person impacted by the change • The association of the reinforcement with actual demonstrated progress or accomplishment • The absence of negative consequences • An accountability system that creates an ongoing mechanism to reinforce the change

ADKAR elements. *This table outlines each ADKAR element as well as the individual factors influencing the success of each element (Prosci, 2012, p. 1)*

Table A2 – Kotter’s 8-step process

STEPS	STAGE	ACTION REQUIRED	PITFALLS
1.	Create a Sense of Urgency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine market and competitive realities for potential crises untapped opportunities. Convince at least 75% of your managers that the status quo is more dangerous than the unknown. Underestimating the difficulty in driving people from their comfort zones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Underestimating the difficulty of driving people from their comfort zones. Becoming paralyzed by risks.
2.	Form a Powerful Guiding Coalition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assemble a group with shared commitment and enough power to lead the change effort. Encourage them to work as a team outside the normal hierarchy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No prior experience in teamwork at the top. Relegating team leadership to an HR, quality, or strategic planning executive rather than a senior line manager.
3.	Create a Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a vision to direct the change effort. Develop strategies for realizing that vision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presenting a vision that’s too complicated or vague to be communicated in five minutes.
4.	Communicate the Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use every vehicle possible to communicate the new vision and strategies for achieving it. Teach new behaviors by the example of the guiding coalition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under-communicating the vision. Behaving in ways antithetical to the vision.
5.	Empower Others to Act on the Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove or alter systems or structures undermining the vision. Encourage risk taking and nontraditional ideas, activities, and actions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failing to remove powerful individuals who resist the change effort.
6.	Plan for and Create Short-Term Wins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define and engineer visible performance improvements. Recognize and reward employees contributing to those improvements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leaving short-term successes up to chance. Failing to score successes early enough (12-24 months into the change effort).
7.	Consolidate and Produce More Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use increased credibility from early wins to change systems, structures, and policies undermining the vision. Hire, promote, and develop employees who can implement the vision. Reinvigorate the change process with new projects and change agents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Declaring victory too soon—with the first performance improvement. Allowing resistors to convince “troops” that the war has been won.
8.	Institutionalize New Approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articulate connections between new behaviors and corporate success. Create leadership development and succession plans consistent with the new approach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not creating new social norms and shared values consistent with changes. Promoting people into leadership positions who don’t personify the new approach.

Kotter’s 8-Step Process. *This table outlines Kotter’s 8-step process including the stages as well as the actions required and pitfalls associated with each stage (Kotter, 2012, p. 1).*