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ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN POLICE ORGANIZATIONS: THE CASE OF COMPSTAT¹

Abstract

Despite the popularity of planned organizational change efforts, the failure rates of implementation are as high as 50 to 70 percent. While these efforts are affected by technical issues, the organizations' approach to change, technological capabilities, leadership, assessment, planning, organizational culture and *communication strategies* are thought to play a more critical role. The central purpose of this study is to examine the role that communication strategies play in the implementation of a popular planned organizational change model known as Compstat. Data were collected in this case study through in-depth interviews and documents, and analyzed with an inductive approach. The study revealed that the role of communication in informing, persuading officers about change and in understanding and addressing sources of resistance was not taken seriously into consideration by change agents. For the most part, communication was regarded as a symbolic activity utilizing one-way, bureaucratic channels (meetings and written orders) and formal language. The end product of this communication strategy was a high level of uncertainty, fear and anxiety and thus resistance of officers to Compstat, who were willing to understand Compstat, change their routines and be a part of this new work environment.

Keywords: Planned Organizational Change, Communication, Uncertainty, Resistance.

POLİS KURUMLARINDA ÖRGÜTSEL DEĞİŞİM VE İLETİŞİM STRATEJİLERİ: COMPSTAT ÖRNEK OLAYI

Öz

Planlı örgütsel değişim çabalarının popülerliğine karşın, uygulamada yaşanan başarısızlık oranları yüzde 50 ile 70'leri bulabilmektedir. Bu başarısızlık bazı teknik nedenlerden kaynaklanabildiği gibi, örgütün değişime yaklaşımı, teknolojik altyapısı, liderlik, değerlendirme, planlama, kurum kültürü ve iletişim stratejileri gibi faktörler daha önemli bir rol oynayabilmektedir. Bu çalışma, ABD'de son on yılda bir çok polis teşkilatı tarafından uygulamaya konulan Compstat isimli değişim modelinin uygulanması sürecinde iletişim stratejilerinin rolünü ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu örnek olay çalışmasının verileri yapılan mülakatlar ve dökümanlardan toplanmış, tümevarım yaklaşımı ile analiz edilmiştir. Çalışma sonuçlarına göre, değişimi yönetenler iletişimin memurları bilgilendirme, değişime ikna etme ve direnmelerinin kaynağını anlama ve gidermeye yönelik olası rolünü etkin kullanmamışlardır. Genel itibariyle, iletişim tek yönlü, bürokratik kanallar (toplantı ve emir yazıları) ve resmi bir dil kullanımını içeren sembolik bir araç olarak kullanılmıştır. Bu iletişim stratejisinin sonucu ise, korku ve endişe, yüksek oranda belirsizlik ve Compstat'ı anlamaya, rutinlerini değiştirmeye ve bu yeni iş ortamının parçası olmaya istekli memurların Compstat'a direnmesi olmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Planlı Örgütsel Değişim, İletişim, Belirsizlik, Direnç.

¹ Doktora tez özeti

1. Introduction

Pervasive change is one of the predictable features of contemporary life, and organizations are no exception. Society's rapidly changing conditions and needs, demographics, market demands, government regulations, pressures created by globalization, increasing competition and resource constraints, and technological developments coalesce to make change a critical issue for all types of organizations (Fairchild, 1989). Pressure for organizations to change has increased worldwide as layoffs, mergers, and closings are becoming an increasing survival strategy (Lewis, 2011). In the case of public organizations, taxpayers and funding sources are progressively demanding higher levels of performance at lower costs, and these pressures also require organizational changes of various kinds (Tromp and Ruben, 2004). All of these factors as well as institutional and cultural pressures have led to more change attempts among both public and private organizations.

In this environment, all types of organizations have increased their efforts to identify new technologies, innovations and new management models in order to address the many emerging challenges and opportunities they face, and to become flexible and adaptable (Zorn, Page and Cheney, 2000). Cameron and Quinn (1999) found that 69% of the U.S. firms and 75% of European firms have engaged in at least one planned change effort over the last decade. A vast and highly profitable consulting industry has emerged in an attempt to respond to the demands of organizations regarding issues such as change management, performance measurement, transformation, organizational development, and reengineering (Gallivan, 2001). The actors of this industry have suggested a number of planned organizational change models such as 'Total Quality Management (TQM)', 'The Balance Scorecard', 'Strategic Planning', and 'Organizational Development', all of which claim to increase the organization's performance, profitability, accountability, effectiveness, legitimacy, quality, and customer satisfaction (Eisenberg and Goodall, 1993).

Therefore, organizational change has become a regular part of business language and organizational functioning. The emergence and promotion of organizational change programs has also increased the popularity of research on organizational change in the last two decades. In response to these demands, scholars have focused on a variety of issues ranging from the content, context, process, and outcome of organizational change (for a review, see Armenakis and Bedeian, 1999). Organizational communication scholars have also studied organizational change with a focus on the role of communication during the change efforts (for a review, see Lewis and Seibold, 1998).

This study specifically addresses the use of communication strategies and reaction of organization members to these strategies during the introduction and implementation of a large scale planned organizational change model called Compstat. Compstat emerged in 1994 in the New York Police Department (NYPD) as a new, complex, multifaceted system (Bratton and Knobler, 1998). It was initially developed as a means to collect timely and accurate data about daily crime patterns to initiate tactics and strategies, increase the flow of information and communication among police station commanders and departments, and ultimately increase performance and accountability (O'Connell and Straub, 2007). Over time, "the initiative has been transformed into a more comprehensive form in its structure and promises, claiming to instigate the changes needed in police organizations and boasting the ability to reduce crime by making police organizations more responsive to management's direction and performance indicators" (Vito, Walsh and Kunselman, 2005: 189). This model combines a range of management principles in its structure to respond to problems. For instance, "the use of different policing styles (i.e., real time crime analysis, targeted crime interdiction, broken windows enforcement, directed patrol), adaptive culture, structural reorganization (i.e., empowerment, managerial accountability, teamwork, geographic decentralization), and a set of innovative strategies and motivational tools are counted in as a part of Compstat" (Silverman and O'Connell, 1999: 130). Regular Compstat meetings are the most visible and important component of this change model.

Basically, Compstat is considered a police version of the strategic planning or/and change management system.

As largely stated in the literature, organizational change is not an easy task. As suggested by Ruben (2009: 1), “Organizations, like individuals, have habits, traditions, and histories, and all of these are powerful forces that reinforce past and present practice, and typically impede efforts to stimulate progress and innovation”. Planned change efforts rarely go precisely as planned and may lead to a total failure or unintended consequences for both organizations and individuals (Harris and Ogbonna, 2002). “The failure rates have been reported to be as high as 50 to 70 percent, of which only 10 percent are attributed to technical problems” (Lewis and Seibold, 1998: 98). Operationally, this failure rate is of great concern due to the substantial loss of time, morale, financial resources, and damage to an organization’s ultimate survival (Lewis, 2011). As stated by Miller, Johnson and Grau (1994), there may be many factors affecting the success or failure of change efforts, namely individual inertia, existing technical capacities, organizational members’ attitudes towards change, motivation for altering behaviors, experience of earlier change initiatives, and individual demographics, but few are as critical as the following cross cutting ones: leadership, planning, assessment, communication, and culture (Ruben, 2009).

This article will specifically address the role of communication while acknowledging the importance of other factors. Communication is essential in creating a vision for change, making understood the need for change, minimizing resistance, and acquiring the participation, motivation, commitment, and buying in of organizational members for planned change efforts. In short, communication strategies and channels through which Compstat is introduced and implemented can play a significant role in how organizational members perceive, appropriate, make sense of, and interpret this initiative which, in turn, will influence the way it was adopted, the degree of resistance and receptivity, and its ultimate success or failure. Keeping in mind this main assumption, this study focus on how information about the Compstat was communicated, which communication strategies and channels utilized in the context of a police organization, and finally the reaction of organizational members to these communication strategies and channels. Based on this ground, the main research questions are:

1) What communication strategies were used to introduce Compstat? Were they viewed as effective by leaders and members of the organization?

2) What communication channels were used to introduce Compstat? Were they viewed as effective by leaders and members of the organization?

2. Communication and Organizational Change

It has been well documented that communication plays a critical role in the successful implementation of any change model and helps people to understand and deal with the change process (Lewis and Seibold, 1998). Generally, the literature dealt with communication in terms of the announcement of change programs (Smeltzer, 1991), disseminating information, soliciting input regarding change (Lewis, 1999), reducing or managing uncertainty and conflict (Bordia, Hobman, Jones, Gallois and Callon, 2004), and sense-making, persuading, soliciting, acquiring feedback (Gallivan, 2001), and framing (Fairhurst, 1993). Communication is also viewed as a tool for creating and sustaining a guiding vision for the organization, facilitating opportunities for participation, decreasing resistance, creating a positive environment and reaction for change, and appropriating and adapting features of change (Lewis, Schmisser, Stephens and Weir, 2006). Certainly, communication strategies and communication channels used in change efforts affect the perception and interpretations of organizational members, which, in turn, affects the outcome and success of planned change efforts (Fairhurst, 2001).

A number of scholars provided evidence of how communication can affect the change process and outcomes. One of the more common findings is that communication has an impact on an organizational member’s perception of the urgency of change. Stanley, Meyer and Topolnytsky

(2005) indicated that distrust in the motives driving change as a result of poor communication is a quite significant source of resistance. In another study, Kotter and Schlesinger (1979) found that misunderstanding as a result of communication problems or inadequate information is one important factor resulting in resistance to change. They indicated that when levels of personnel information sharing and communications are increased, cooperation also increases, and negative employee attitudes as well as resistance to change decrease. Similarly, Armenakis and Harris (2002) identified the most important factor for failure in change attempts as the managers' inability to persuade organization members to create a sense of urgency and obtain support for the change. They asserted that communication would create readiness and the motivation to support and institutionalize the change.

The link between communication and uncertainty is also subject to scholarly interest. Empirical works have shown that timely, credible, and trustworthy communication reduces uncertainty and anxiety regarding change. This, in turn, increases the sense of control and, willingness to participate in planned change efforts, and decreases the overall resistance of organizational members (Miller, Johnson and Grau, 1994). In contrast to commonsense, whereas the quality of information matters for organizational members, the mere frequency of communication was unrelated to members' perceptions of change and its success (Lewis, 2006).

Recent studies suggest that better information dissemination, more knowledge, or more effective communication alone will not necessarily lead to desirable changes. Although it may contribute to a better understanding and awareness of a problem and the need for change, it may not be enough to minimize resistance and persuade individuals to act in new ways or alter their behaviors (Chess and Johnson, 2007). Evidence increasingly points out the importance of asking for input, participation, empowerment, active listening, openness, transparency, emancipating qualities of communication, genuine dialogue and exchange of information (Fairhurst, 2005). It is suggested that these factors are associated with increased commitment to change, taking ownership of the problem, increased accuracy in perceptions regarding the reasons for and goals of change, and decreased resistance to change (Chess and Johnson, 2007).

The content of communication is also critical for the success of change implementation. Specifically, the way individual frames communication can influence the perceptions of organizational members and can minimize resistance, mobilize action, and bring about ownership and support. Organizational members are not passive receivers of communication but rather actively filter communication through the spectacles of existing beliefs and values, which have a strong impact on how they interpret the messages received from other members (Dilling and Moser, 2007). Supporting this assumption, Dunwoody (2007) found that selection of congruent and local frames of reference and metaphors that are accessible to organizational members are more likely to get their attention and promote change and mobilize action. For example, the use of a concept such as 'ozone hole' in comparison to 'climate change' influenced a community's reactions and interpretations to the same problem (Dunwoody, 2007). In the same line of thought, Gallivan (2001) argued that even members belonging to the same organization with different hierarchical levels, occupational communities, or prior socialization into specific jobs might have different experiences and mental frames which may influence the way they receive and interpret change messages. Following the findings of Dunwoody, change agents should even consider these possible differences when planning change, developing communication programs, and selecting frames.

In addition to these points, the source and channels of communication influence organizational members' reactions to change attempts; all information channels are not equal in terms of their perceptions. It is commonly believed that face-to-face communication is more helpful and essential for major organizational and behavioral changes. While interpersonal communication serves as a better predictor of behavioral change, mediated communication can be more effective in setting the agenda, providing general information, and reaching more people with fewer resources (Dunwoody, 2007). Dilling and Moser (2007) found that

organizational members are more likely to alter their behaviors if the information is received from trusted, familiar, and informal sources. Although communication channels can be used for both disseminating information and asking for input, among other functions, Lewis (1999) found that change agents focus more on disseminating information than on soliciting input and invitations for participation. Based on these agents' perceptions, the selection of channels for disseminating information -especially use of general information meetings- is found to be related to successful change outcomes. Other than general information meetings, small informal discussions are the most frequently used channels for disseminating information, whereas written information is the least frequently used channel of communication (Lewis, 2011). In terms of formal and informal communication, Lewis (1999) found that informal channels are utilized more for disseminating information and requesting input from organizational members. Finally, Timmerman (2003) stated that source, organization, media, message, task, receiver, and strategic factors are likely to influence the selection of communication channels that agents employ to disseminate information.

Although there is an extensive literature on the role of communication during planned change efforts, there is a lack of theory or framework. Lewis (2007) placed discussions regarding the communication of organizational change into a larger framework and provided communication strategy dimensions of models that are employed during the implementation phase. These dimensions include: (a) disseminating information /soliciting feedback, (b) one-sided/two sided messages, (c) gain/loss frame, (d) blanket/targeted messages, and (e) discrepancy/self-efficacy. Change agents use a combination of these strategies based on the organization's context (i.e., culture, history of change, needs and goals in implementing change, willingness to change) and institutional factors that shape the organizational environment (Lewis, 2007). The first dimension deals with the agent's decision as whether to use communication resources in sharing information concerning change or solicit input from organizational members. While soliciting input is associated with participation, feedback, and alternative views, disseminating information is more top-down oriented and attempts to influence organizational members' compliance, reduce uncertainty, and support official plans (Lewis, 2011). The second dimension is more concerned with the balance between positive versus negative messages regarding change. In other words, agents can make a decision to emphasize only the positive aspects or decide to use negative as well as positive ones. In this sense, while some change agents may focus simply on arguments that support one position and ignore other positions, others may focus on both supporting and opposing arguments in order to provide a more realistic point of view (Lewis, 2007). There is little empirical evidence that has revealed which method is more effective. Rather, some empirical works show secrecy and dishonesty to be related to a failure of communication (Colvin and Kilmann, 1990). Scholars also suggest that organizational members may request any information (even negative) regarding change plans (Lewis, 2007). The third strategic communication dimension concerns "whether the persuasive message is framed in terms of gains or losses" (Lewis, 2011). While a gain frame emphasizes the advantages of compliance, a loss frame emphasizes the disadvantages of noncompliance (Lewis, 2011). These gains or losses can be both organizational and individual in nature. For example, a gain frame could be stated similar to the following: If you support this change, both the organization and you will earn in this process. On the other hand, a loss frame would suggest: if you do not support this change, it might lead to organizational layoffs. The fourth communication strategy dimension relates to the change agents' choices as to whether messages should target specific groups or individuals based on their key roles in the change process, or be more general by using a blanket strategy, wherein the same messages will be sent to all groups or individuals (Lewis, 2007). The selection of these strategies is associated with the perceived need for consensus building or availability of resources (Lewis et al., 2001). The fifth and final dimension deals with the degree of focus on messages (discrepancy) that suggest the need to initiate change and/or messages (efficacy) that promote the idea that an

organization is capable of successfully implementing the change (Lewis, 2011). Both types of messages are important for the successful implementation of change.

Besides these communication strategy dimensions, Lewis, Hamel, and Richardson (2001) identified six models of implementing communication that are employed by change agents to interact with various stakeholders. They found that the perceptions of change agents in regard to the needs for communicative efficiency or consensus building during change efforts can be used to predict the following models of implementation of communication: equal dissemination (disseminating information to all members equally), equal participation (both disseminating information and soliciting input for equal participation), need to know (disseminating information to groups who must know or express a desire for the information), marketing (constructing messages specific to individuals or to groups), quid pro quo (focus on groups who have something the organization needs), and reactionary (response to an unexpected situation) (Lewis et al., 2001). Change agents may be more willing to reach a consensus depending on the dominant values of organization such as participation, importance of the change, and leadership styles. In certain cases, resource limitations (i.e., time, personnel, and financial) promotes a change agent's perception of the need for communicative efficiency (Lewis, 2011).

Keeping in mind the aforementioned communication strategy dimensions and the six models of implementation, this study will focus on how information about the Compstat was communicated, and will describe which strategies, models, and channels were utilized that lead to better or worse implementation in the context of a police organization.

While it is clear that communication strategies and communication channels (i.e., face to face, written) play important roles in the dynamics of planned change, there is still much to be learned about the specific ways in which these dynamics operate. The goal of this article is to bring a deeper understanding on the role of communication in the change process.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Setting

In this article, a large police department, Newark Police Department (NPD), in the east coast of the USA was selected for an in-depth analysis of communication strategies used to implement a planned organizational change model called Compstat. This police department was selected due to its relevance for this research. First and foremost, the NPD has employed the Compstat since 1997, and the department was receptive to conducting interviews. In addition, its large size, crime ridden environment, openness to change in the past and revision of Compstat, initiation of a number of innovative programs, reorganization of the department, and reduction in crime rates after the implementation of Compstat made this police department a good and interesting sample of study.

3.2. Data Collection

Data regarding communication strategies during the implementation of Compstat in the NPD was collected through in-depth interviews of police officers in different ranks and positions and analysis of documents. The researcher conducted 26 interviews with members of the NPD. The basic sampling strategy was to reach a sample of individuals from diverse groups and varied functions within the organization. The interviews were arranged by a contact person who was assigned by the police director to assist with the study. There were a representative number of officers from a wide range of ranks and units. This enabled cross-checking of information in an effort to establish different views held concerning the introduction and implementation of Compstat (Olie, 1994).

Documents are critical to the function of organizations. In this study, a variety of documents were analyzed. These documents included the Compstat report, organization web

site, the organizational chart, mission and vision statement, media articles, brochures, general orders and memos. There were eight general orders and memos used to communicate change by upper and middle level managers in department, which is essential to understanding the content and scope of communication.

3.3. Data Analysis

The data obtained from the interviews and aforementioned documents were used for the analysis and interpretation of the use of communication in the implementation of Compstat in this specific organization. The research took an inductive approach to examining the present phenomenon, insofar as the “categories emerge out of the examination of the data ... without firm preconceptions dictating relevance in concepts and hypotheses beforehand” (Walker, 1985: 58). The overall data analysis process can be considered in terms of two interrelated concepts: analysis and interpretation. Lindlof and Taylor (2002: 210-211) defined analysis: “the process of labeling and breaking down raw data and reconstituting them into patterns, themes, concepts, and propositions. Interpretation is the process of making construal”. In this process, both analysis and interpretation come together to clarify the meaning and make knowledge claims about the given research topic.

Specifically, the constant comparative method was used for analysis and interpretation. In fact, this method appears to be particularly useful in coding a large amount of texts, forming categories, establishing the conceptual boundaries of the categories, assigning the segments to categories, and summarizing (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The analysis process, within the scope of the constant comparative method, can be summarized as follows. First of all, in order to prepare the data for analysis, all interview statements and documents were logged into the computer. The Atlas-ti software that is designed for content analysis of large amounts of transcripts and other written documents was used for the analysis and interpretation of data, and it facilitated a coherent means of coding, categorizing, analyzing, and interpreting. This software provided the flexibility and non-hierarchical coding of data compatible with the constant comparative method.

The analysis process involved three stages: *open coding*, *axial coding*, and *selective coding*. Open coding can be considered as a form of content analysis where the data are read, coded, and categorized into themes on the basis of ‘*look-alike*’ characteristics rather than predetermined categories (Orlikowski, 1993). The purpose is to “group similar events, happenings, and objects under a common heading or classification” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998: 103). Within this iterative process, a total of about 141 codes were generated. This process ended by classifying 141 codes under the 14 broader categories. The next step, axial coding, is “the process of relating categories to their subcategories and linking categories at the level of properties and dimensions” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998: 142). During axial coding, these categories were reviewed and re-sorted in order to relate them to subcategories, linkages, and relationships that have greater explanatory power to answer research questions. The final step is selective coding, in which core categories are selected and systematically integrated to narrate what is happening, form general explanations, generate a larger theoretical stance, and make knowledge claims about the organization studied (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

4. Findings

4.1. The Context of Change

The history of Compstat in the NPD goes back to 1997. It refers to a time frame immediately after the resignation of New York Police Department (NYPD) police director William Bratton in 1996 and discussion of the role of Compstat in the significant reduction of crime in the NYPD. The popularity of Compstat spread rapidly across the country in the following years. The NPD, which initiated Compstat in 1997, was one of the earlier adopters. A 27-year veteran of the NPD, Deputy Chief Joseph Santiago, was nominated and became police director of the NPD in July

of 1996 (Kleinknecht, 2000). The popularity and perceived success of Compstat in changing the NYPD in many aspects seems to overlap with the vision of the new police director at the NPD, who had promised to make substantial changes in police performance in his first 100 days (Stewart, 1996).

During these years, the NPD, as one of the largest police organizations in a similar geographical context of the NYPD, had a number of problems which were widely recognized and shared by the new police director and officers in the department. The main problems stated by the former police director and study participants were high crime rates, lack of communication within the department, corruption, high response time to 911 calls, reactive policing, and lack of updated information, resources, mission, strategy, and accountability. It was clear from the interviews that both the police director and officers who were working in the NPD at that time shared the idea that the NPD definitely needed change in these years. The problems in the NPD, similar to those of the NYPD before Compstat, and the legitimacy and perceived success of Compstat responding to these problems created a tendency to adopt Compstat with a hope to produce similar success.

4.2. Announcement of Change

After the police director's decision to implement Compstat, the first real attempt to inform officers about this decision and the implementation of Compstat in the NPD occurred in a conference room at police headquarters. The police director Joseph Santiago, and two consultants, Jack Maple and John Linder, explained the main principles behind Compstat and how they planned to implement this model in the NPD. These general information meetings, organized in two sessions, were recommended as one of the cornerstones of the introduction phase of Compstat. A number of officers stated their views regarding these meetings. One of the officers stated:

The director at that time actually did a very abnormal thing. He had two sessions with the help of professors coming from the college and he actually spoke to all commanders. After these two sessions, he got up there and told the department; this is where we are going and this is what we are going to be doing and this is how we are going to get there. Some commanders bought into it, some commanders wrote their retirement papers that day.

The following statement of another officer gave information about the communication strategy used in these meetings:

It was more like; this is something that we are going to do. It works. It worked for New York. This is where we need to be, because if we keep going in this way, we have nothing left. We need to do something. No one else came to the table, no one attempted the challenge, and nobody cared.

It is evident from the newspaper articles and interview statements that these two meetings were organized to announce the change, the need for change, and give basic information related to Compstat. Communication was like a lecture in these two general information meetings. The statements of officers pointed out that the police director did not intend to solicit feedback, persuade all officers, minimize resistance, or acquire participation, increase motivation and commitment, or the buy in of all officers. Rather, there was an authoritarian strategy in which the police director used direct assertive requests for compliance, as well as threats and aggression to achieve objectives in his mind. This top-down, one way, hard approach reflected in above mentioned interviews statements. As shown in these statements, the police director believed in the benefit of Compstat regardless of what other officers in the organization think. Interestingly enough, some officers claimed that this approach of the police director was part of a strategy to eliminate or replace some commanders in the NPD, rather than to involve them, as reflected in the following statement of one officer:

Part of the methodology that goes along with Compstat was to get rid of whole bunch of precincts commanders. There would be a large number of changes anyway. But, this situation allowed the police director to say sort of turning the whole process and making things dramatically different.

In addition to these meetings, another formal procedure to inform officers in these early phases of the initiative was written orders. As confirmed by many officers, there were general orders and some memos regarding how to implement this initiative. Thus, there were two different communication channels reported by the officers in the introduction phase of Compstat. The first one was these two general information meetings organized by the NPD in a formal, face to face, and one way communication approach. The second was general orders, which were the formal and written form of communication. These documents are suggested to have been written with a bureaucratic and strict language.

In addition to these formal channels, there were also a good deal of informal communication about Compstat and its consequences. As stated by participants in the study, officers communicated about this initiative informally based on the first cues provided in the general information meetings and the well-known case of the NYPD: “We read newspaper stories about the case of the NYPD. When Joseph Santiago decided to implement it, like any other things, it was criticized by some, sometimes openly sometimes behind the doors.” Communication strategies and channels at this phase are illustrated in the Table-1.

Table 1 Communication Strategies and Channels during the Introduction

Communication Strategies and Channels during the Introduction Phase of Compstat		
Formal Channels		Informal Channels
General information meetings	General orders and memos	Gossip behind the scenes
Oral, formal, face to face, one way	Written, top-down, formal, strict, bureaucratic language	Oral, Informal, face to face

As briefly shown, there was a heavy reliance on the traditional communication channels such as written documents and formal meetings in the introduction of Compstat. Written documents such as general orders and memorandums were the most articulated form of change communication. These written documents were very strict and formal in manner and written in a well-organized manner. Like any other organizations, small meetings or informal channels were also used to communicate change in the NPD.

4.3. Communication Strategy Dimension

This process can be put into a larger framework by referring to the communication strategy dimension adapted by Lewis (2007). First, this communication strategy aimed at disseminating information in a top down orientation without a strong effort to reduce uncertainty and gain support for the change. The police director and consultants seemed to focus more on the positive aspects and benefits of the Compstat for the organization. The interviews and statements of the police director in the newspaper articles indicated that there was a focus on loss frame, which emphasizes the disadvantages of noncompliance. In other words, the police director used a hard strategy in which he used direct assertive requests for compliance as well as threats and aggression to achieve objectives in his mind. It is also clear that the communication strategy targeted more specific groups, namely mid-level officers as they were considered the key for the success of the initiative. Finally, the police director gave the message that the NPD undeniably needs change and is capable of successfully implementing this change.

In terms of the models suggested by Lewis, Hamel, and Richardson (2001), it is possible to say that the communication strategy in these early phases of the initiative targeted more mid-level

officers who *need to know* at least the basic aspects of the Compstat. In other words, change agents prioritized *communication efficiency* compared to *consensus building*, and focused specifically on the most critical group -mid-level officers- in this change model. This communication strategy is illustrated in the Table-2.

Table-2 Characteristics of Communication Strategy

Characteristics of Communication Strategy	
Communication Efficiency	
Communication Strategy	Examples from Interviews
Disseminating information	This is where we are going and this is what we are going to be doing and this is how we are going to get there.
Focus on positive aspects of Compstat	It works. It worked for New York.
Focus on loss frame (the disadvantages of noncompliance)	Part of methodology that is grown up with Compstat was to get rid of whole bunch of precincts commanders.
Targeting specific groups (Mid-level Managers)	He had two sessions with the help of professors coming from the college and he actually spoke to commanders.
Self-efficacy	This is where we need to be. This is how we are going to get there

In short, change agents focused on disseminating information rather than soliciting officers' input. The upper echelon in the NPD was not especially concerned with persuading officers and reaching a consensus. Rather, the main purpose was to announce the change and give basic information about the initiative. From their perspective, these communication strategies were both appropriate and effective, though not for officers who were expecting more involvement in, more information about, and training about the initiative.

4.4. Communication Strategy and Its Consequences

Compstat is certainly a large scale, revolutionary change model that implies significant differences in the way commanders work. It requires new ways of organizing the work, increases the accountability and responsibilities of managers and the workload; and requires new work routines. These kind of major change efforts lead inevitably to a degree of uncertainty in organizations, especially when certain communication strategies are not followed to minimize it, as illustrated in this case. In the NPD, most of the officers were not aware of what was expected of them in this change process, the extent and nature of the change, and how to prepare for Compstat and regular Compstat meetings. The common perception of officer in the introduction phase was lack of information, lack of training, lack of participation, dialogue and involvement, top-down and aggressive manner.

Officers' expectations of training and more knowledge to decrease uncertainty about the initiative were clearly not taken into consideration. As reported by an officer, "There was fear because of something different. We were in the dark. We did not know what to do." Another officer summarized the general feeling of officers in those phases: "It was more a sense of unknown, what is going to happen, a sense of fear, how this is going to affect me." Most of the officers seem to believe that Compstat could have been introduced and implemented differently in terms of communication strategies. As illustrated in the following excerpt, they believe that well designed communication strategies and training would have resulted in a smoother transition with fewer problems understanding and adapting to Compstat:

I just learned how to be prepared by doing it within these 12 years. If he (Joseph Santiago) collected all the commanders and executive officers when it took place and somebody would explain and train how to be prepared and run it, I think the beginning would have been much better.

From the perspective of upper echelon including police director, there was a reason for the selection of this kind of communication strategy. Both the police director and some officers believe that if the police director had had intention of building consensus, or if this initiative had been implemented gradually, it would have run the risk of being sabotaged by internal politics, structures, and culture. The following statement of one officer illustrated one of the reasons behind this communication strategy:

Because corruption is widespread, misconduct was widespread; they were not willing for any change. He decided he did not want to talk to these people. This was his idea, because he needed to do that, because there was so much corruption that he did not think that he was going to get people to buy into it anyway.

The newspaper stories which reflect the perspective of Joseph Santiago confirmed this point as follows: “How do you ask people to act professionally without first creating an environment where they can do it? Mr. John Black asked rhetorically” (Smothers, 2002). Openly, the general approach of the police director was not to persuade all officers and get people to buy into change using a communication strategy to create and sustain the need for change and inform officers about the change process. He had no intention of adopting a communication strategy to solicit feedback as to whether change was needed and Compstat was appropriate for the NPD or not. This approach was justified not only by the police director but also by some officers, who referred to the major problems in the MPD, police culture identified with hierarchy, paramilitary structure and chain of command, large size of the organization, and need for strong leadership and tough manner. Some of these officers also pointed out the level of difference between the current practices of the organization and the proposed change to explain the necessity of this approach.

However, some officers suggest that they were not opposed to the reasons and goals of the change, but they did not have any information about the initiative or, what was expected from them, which made the process painful. This is reflected in the following statement of one officer:

In 1997, we developed Compstat. I went to the warrant squad unit in 1997, where I had my first taste of Compstat. It was sometimes good, sometimes bad. It was like he knew where this department should be run. But, we did not know what is going on, what we should be doing to make this work. None of us know that what we should know. We were not on the same page and it was not our fault. He did not ease this process. If they came around, listen, you are going to be part of this process called Compstat. And this is what it is. These are the things you need to know to be prepared. We would run more smoothly. But they [the consultants] never talked to us about it. It is like, one day, here we go. They said here is the new process and this is how we are going to direct each command. But, we did not have any training. You got the training, if you want something different from somebody. They spent a lot of time with the director but they never spent time with us. That was the problem. It was all new to us.

It is clearly understood that there were some officers who would have been more supportive of Compstat, if the upper echelon had asked for input and participation, trained them, and communicated broadly and honestly about the ramifications, implementation, and benefits of the initiative for the organization and for individuals. The following statement of one officer reflects the expectations of officers in this phase: “He should involve more people; talk to people, and inform people. This is our job to fight crime and we can do it collectively by using Compstat. Basically, we need to talk about the benefits of Compstat with people.” As the Compstat was not truly understood or adopted, the extent of resistance increased.

5. Discussion

The main research question in this study is the communication strategies and channels used in the implementation of Compstat and perception of officers from different ranks. The

most defining action in the introduction of Compstat was two general information meetings organized with the contribution of two consultants. The other communication channel was written orders which were perceived less important than these meetings. These meetings and written orders can be categorized as the only formal communication practices in the introduction phase of the initiative.

The upper echelon, specifically the police director, announced change in these meetings and gave his main messages concerning the need, scope, and content of change, his expectancies, goals, and vision. The way communication was framed in these meetings can be illustrated as follows: We need to change *-discrepancy-*; we have the capability to change *-self-efficacy-*; this (Compstat) is what we need *-appropriateness-*, and this is what you have to do *-obligation-*. The police director repeated these messages in these two meetings and in newspaper stories, in which he asked officers to be part of this new environment or leave. The nature of communication in these general information meetings was top-down and directive. There was not any known effort to solicit officers' input and persuade them.

Written documents were also used extensively to communicate change. Some officers even stated that written documents such as memos and orders were the most common form of communication for change not only for the Compstat but also for every kind of change. These written documents were used in this process with a top-down and directive approach. The language of these documents reflects the bureaucratic nature of this organization.

From the perspective of officers, there was not any well planned communication strategy to inform or persuade officers, and involve them to the change process, or mitigate their resistance. Change agents used one-way communication approach with a purpose of disseminating information. The concerns and expectations of the officers to get training and more information about Compstat, specifically, its justifications and purpose, the officers' role in the new model was not taken into account by the upper echelon. The end product of this process was inadequate information, and a high level of anxiety and uncertainty, and high level of resistance among officers at all levels.

From the upper echelon's perspective, the general communication strategy was not to persuade all officers, or to create and sustain the need for change and inform officers about the change process. Rather, the strategy was to distinguish competent officers from incompetent officers. The police director presented the autocratic nature of communication strategies in the introduction phase as necessary. According to him, the main problem in the introduction phase was not lack of information or training, but serious problems in the NPD and a generation of officers who were not used to accountability and information sharing. Communication strategies were part of the strategy to change some officers within the NPD. Participative and democratic approaches would not work in an organization like the NPD known for its serious problems and corrupt officers. Both the police director and some officers believe that if the police director had had intention of building consensus, or if this initiative had been implemented gradually, it would have run the risk of being sabotaged by internal politics, structures, and culture. Thus, according to the upper echelon, there was a communication strategy in the NPD, but this was completely different than the strategies suggested in the literature.

It is clear that officers in different rank and positions differ radically in the interpretation of communication strategies. On one hand, the intolerance and autocratic approach taken in the communication practices in the introduction phase is understandable. If the main purpose of change efforts is to alter the organization's structure, culture, and some officers, as exemplified in the NPD, participative and democratic approaches and communication strategies may not provide the best results. Even, in an organization, which was characterized by a high power distance and strict hierarchy, these democratic and participative approaches may lead to undesired results. It would be wrong to assume that better information dissemination, more knowledge, or more effective communication alone would have led to support for Compstat among all officers.

Although it may have contributed to a better understanding and awareness of the goals of the initiative, and its implication for the organization, even more collaborative communication strategies would likely not have been effective in persuading all officers to accept the change. There were certainly some officers who were against the change itself as they have a fear of losing their routines, position and advantages in the new system.

On the other hand, it was obvious that there were some officers who were willing to understand the initiative, its justifications and purpose, their role in this initiative, and what they have to do to be part of this new environment. The above-mentioned communication strategy led to a lack of information and unnecessary dilemma for these officers. These officers expected to have the tools and means to know what was expected from them and how to do it. This was a clear problem in the NPD, which increased resistance among officers. Consequently, it was evident that these officers would have been more supportive of Compstat, if the upper echelon had asked for input and participation, trained them, and communicated broadly and honestly about the ramifications, implementation, and benefits of the initiative for the organization and for individuals.

6. Suggestions and Conclusion

The case of the NPD shows the primary role of communication in the change process. Based on the problems in the introduction phase of Compstat, it is fair to say that change agents must pay attention to communication processes and strategies when guiding change. Communication strategies in the NPD certainly increased the level of resistance. In this sense, in order to distinguish organizational members who resist the change from those who just resist the way the change is introduced, change agents need to ensure that effective communication strategies characterized as transparent, honest, consistent, and continuous are used to inform organizational members about the reasons for change, and its implications for the organization and for them. Otherwise, organizational members who are willing to be part of the change and likely to support the change can instead become resisters. In other words, change agents can contribute to the occurrence of resistance through communication itself.

Organizational culture is an important concept to be used in the change process. In particular, the ambiguity and uncertainty experienced in the introduction of change models make communication central to the construction and development of certain expectancies, labels, and beliefs about change. By using culture as an influential discourse resource (Ravasi and Schultz, 2006), communication might be used for creating meaningful explanations of new claims, and convergence of interpretations about the change. If change agents define symbols and frames consistent and congruent with organizational members' culture, these frames can be used to define change, develop a positive perception, and guide the interpretations of organizational members. If the manner in which change agents frame a problem does not clearly resonate with any current cultural values, this situation limits the ability of communicators to persuade and get attention and support from organizational members during the change process (Dilling & Moser, 2007).

This point implies the primary role of change agents as mediators of change. They employ communication as a sense making tool or frame change in different ways. Understanding an organization's culture might help change agents to select appropriate communication strategies and frame their messages appropriately. For example, in individualistic cultures, change agents can focus on self-interest as a result of change. This manner can certainly minimize resistance and ease the implementation of these kinds of initiatives.

In the early phases of change process, a heavy dose of true and false information is injected to the organization. The false information should be thoroughly reviewed by the upper echelon and corrected before being too late. For this reason, two-ways of communication and systematic communication strategies is needed to control the gossip and manipulation and convey the true information in a timely manner which is essential for the success of change efforts.

The success of Compstat and specific initiatives like Compstat certainly requires an understanding of the nature of the change process, factors that facilitate or impede change efforts, and the sources of resistance and receptivity. Communication is essential in informing officers, managing their perception, constructing positive interpretation, and mitigating resistance. Change agents should be aware of implications of communication and manage and guide change process accordingly.

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