

## There is no such thing as a change project

What is a change project supposed to be? In an IT project, IT is probably core. With a building project, the neighbours know what have to expect. Is a change project about change? That makes about as much sense as if you said that the goal of your company is to make profit: none. There is no such thing as a change project.

Change is never content or goal, it is part of the nature of a project. In projects you want to achieve objectives, and in general the steering committee agrees that there should be a perceivable difference before and after. With this logic one could also say that there are no other projects than change projects. It's one or the other.

Change always has a purpose – at times it might be a limited one like raising the profile of the new manager triggering the change. But this is risky, as employees aren't stupid; the new get irritated, the exhausted cynical, and the others just duck until the storm has cleared up, and display an amazing amount of creativity setting up subcultures and parallel processes. This creativity could be used in a better way...

Project teams commonly are staffed with excellent specialists on the topic, and despite change being a mandatory subject in the training of project managers, the change aspect is massively underestimated in many cases. I suggest that every project, not just the big ones, is lead with a high systematic attention for the change aspect or is supported in an appropriate way, be it internally or externally.

Change for it's own sake has a something of command economy: we launch a carrot project because now carrots have to be planted. Such an approach can take on the droll character of a Tinguely installation. A sports journalists once used this comparison to describe a terribly bad soccer team: „Always moving, funny to watch, and totally bereft of any determination.“ Just that the people concerned usually don't find it that funny.

On the other hand there is a view, based on systes theory, that an organisation has to be reconstructed from time to time in order to stay agile. Maybe one can assign the cylces of centralisation and decentralisation in large companies to this kind of intervention. Long-serving employees talk about a seven year frequency – maybe it's worthwhile to check your organisation for things that happen every seven years...but even this kind of projects constructed as internal fitness programs are not change projects, after all, but rather anti-ossification projects. And a bit of Tinguely can be as good as gold, indeed, mostly in the area of creativity and innovation.

Hairsplitting? I don't think so. What matters after all is: what is this good for? What is your goal? That should give a project it's name. This way you can expect more readiness from your employees to support the change needed to achieve the goals. Just a tiny minority of all people say „change“ if you ask them about their hobbies. You need a good reason for change, that's just how it is.

Your core business is not change – but you have to be able to initiate and shape change in order to run your business successfully in the long run. There are no change projects, but every single project contains change. And successful change also means to keep up the productivity of your organisation and your employees, to foster the wellbeing of the involved and the concerned, to have a sufficient number of the former, and to show mindful leadership, meaning to guide the process with prudence and integrity, in order to make things better and achieve your goals efficiently. That is worthwhile the effort.