

# **Implementation of Major Organisational Change Process in NamPower for Improved Customer Service**

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## **Abstract**

Reliable and affordable energy is vital for economic growth and development and, therefore, for improvements in wellbeing for all; but also for poverty alleviation, especially for the rural majority in Namibia. In this country NamPower is charged with generating, transmitting and trading energy, and therefore is critical to achieving the socio-economic aspirations of the country as presented in Vision 2030. For NamPower to deliver on the expectations above, the management of the organisation must move with time – as both production technology and demand for energy change rapidly – which would make planning and implementing organisational change an important component of NamPower's management style. This paper attempts to identify the factors that must be taken into consideration for the implementation of major organisational change at NamPower to be successful.

The study adopted a mixed research design, using both qualitative and quantitative data. Survey questionnaire (with both closed- and open-ended questions) was used in interviews with three categories of staff members of NamPower. Kotter's (1995) eight-step change model provided the basis for many of the questions in the questionnaire. The answers to the closed-ended questions were captured in a 5-point Likert scale, which ranged from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. The main findings of the study were that though the management of NamPower established the need for change through discussion, persuasion, and encouragement, presented a clear vision of where NamPower would be after change, and developed strategies to guide workers towards change, individual risk-taking, which contributes to making change successful, was not encouraged and the benefits that will accrue to workers from change were neither discussed nor even communicated. Also, though the reward system sometimes recognised individual initiative, effort and achievement, it was not seen by the majority to be fair because it did not often recognise rank. These clogs in the wheels of change need to be removed for NamPower to be an excellent service provider.

**Key words:** NamPower, implementing organisational change, need for change

## 1.0 Introduction

For a resource-dependent Third-World economy like Namibia, reliable and affordable energy is vital for economic growth and development and, therefore, for poverty alleviation and improvements in wellbeing, especially if these are to reach the rural majority. This need for energy is what makes NamPower – the national power utility company charged with generating, transmitting and trading energy – critical to achieving the socio-economic aspirations enshrined in the country's Vision 2030, from where they have been distilled into the current Fourth National Development Plan (Government of Namibia, 2012). However, for NamPower to deliver on these expectations, its management must move with the time – as both production technology and demand for energy change rapidly – which would make planning and implementing organisational change important and permanent features of NamPower's management style.

This paper juxtaposes NamPower's attempt at implementation of major organisational change with the ingredients of the menu in the literature in the hope of identifying areas where improvements could be made for future organisational change efforts to have even better success. It will answer the following organisational change-related questions, using data collected from interviews with staff of NamPower and captured on a five-point Likert scale:

- Did the management of NamPower establish the need and urgency for organisational change?
- To what extent did the management of NamPower motivate employees and mobilize commitment towards change?
- To what extent did the management of NamPower take the key factors that have been identified in the literature into consideration in their implementation of major organisational change?
- What can improve the attitude of NamPower employees towards the organisational change implementation approach adopted by their management?

The rest of the paper is organised as follows: Section 2 reviews some of the literature on organisational change and change management with a view to identifying some of the key factors that must characterise any successful organisational change effort; Section 3 describes the methodology that was adopted for the study; Section 4 presents the results of the survey and discusses the findings in the light of the literature and in a way that reveals the extent to which the management of NamPower aligned their practice to the key factors recommended in the literature; and Section 5 concludes with recommendations on how change management at NamPower could be brought closer to the guidelines in the literature to improve the chances of success.

## 2.0 Literature Reviews

In this era of globalisation, competition and innovation have combined to redefine market structures, reshape industries and give customers unprecedented value and choice, putting tremendous pressure on organisations to make radical changes to organisational design and culture to be more proactive in the market – to be more ‘market driven’ – and thus grow (Egan and Thomas, 2005; Biedenbacha and Soumllderholma 2008; Armenakis and Harris, 2009; Appelbaum et. al., 2012). Because change has become a continuum in the business arena (Dawson, 2003, p. 48; Van Tonder, 2004, p. 232; Gilley et al., 2009) – or as Weick and Quinn (1999) put it, “change never starts because it never stops” – adapting to manage change effectively has also become a continuum. These facts, to some extent, explain NamPower’s concerns about and effort at implementation of organisational change to improve efficiency and effectiveness. This section will glean from the literature issues that should be considered and procedures that should be followed for major organisational change efforts to be successful. The results from this search will provide guidelines for the questionnaire that will be administered to a sample of NamPower staff.

Implementing change effectively in business organisations has its challenges as shown by the high failure rates (Kondel, 2004; Todnem, 2005; Kotter, 2008; Armenakis and Harris, 2009; Whelan-Berry and Somerville, 2010). This failure rate may be explained by Todnem’s (2005) observation that the change management landscape consists of “a wide range of contradictory and confusing theories and approaches” some of which lack empirical evidence and are often based on unchallenged hypotheses regarding the nature of contemporary organisational change management, and so tends to be reactive, discontinuous and ad hoc. To ensure success in this area, therefore, it is important to acquire the necessary skills for discerning and using appropriate organisational change models (Richesin, 2011). Some of the change management models/theories that have stood the test of time are: Lewin’s (1947) unfreezing the present state and learning new behaviours to bring about the desired changes; Lippitt, Watson & Westley’s (1958) extension of Lewin’s (1947) theory into a seven-step theory that focused on the various roles of the change agent rather than on the change itself; and Kotter’s (1995, 2007) eight-step model for effective implementation of change.

Richesin (2011) recommends Kotter’s model as one that has been used as a guide in the change efforts of over 150 major international corporations – including Capital One, Coca-Cola Company, Dell Inc., Estee Lauder Companies, Merrill Lynch, MTV, and the World Bank – and has helped corporate leaders in these organisations to build capacity to drive transformation. It is upon this recommendation that the Kotter model is adopted for evaluating NamPower’s organisational change.

The eight steps of Kotter’s model are: 1. Establishing a sense of urgency for change; 2. Forming a powerful guiding coalition; 3. Creating a vision; 4. Communicating the vision; 5. Empowering others to act; 6. Planning for and creating short-term wins; 7. Consolidating improvements and sustaining the change; and 8. Institutionalising the new approaches. These eight steps were meant to be followed one after the other in sequence; each step building on the previous one, for, as Kotter (1995, p. 83) explains, “Whenever you leave one of the steps in the 8-step change process without finishing the work, you usually pay a big price later on”.

Richesin (2011) reports evaluation of an organisational change initiative that was meant to improve service delivery – among other goals – using Kotter’s (1995) 8-step change model as a benchmark of success. The study was based on staff perceptions of the change initiative. The research instrument used had 16 questions – two on each of Kotter’s 8 steps – designed to assess staff perception of the change one year into the initiative. The objective was to determine the extent to which the organisation’s implementation of its change initiative was aligned to Kotter’s 8-step change model. The survey questions were therefore drawn to test this alignment and responses were captured using a 5-point Likert scale, which ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A high score would indicate not only a positive staff perception of the change initiative but also that staff members were unknowingly showing that their organisation’s change process was implemented in line with Kotter’s 8-step change model. The outcome of this evaluation was identification of specific areas of deficiency which required attention in the organisation’s implementation of change, which then served as a starting point for making improvements in the organisation. This study wants to do that for NamPower and so the methodology for Richesin’s (2011) evaluation was adopted for this study.

An important finding of Richesin’s evaluation was that, in spite of the numerous theories and studies on organisational change, there still is resistance to change initiatives because of the way change is planned and implemented. Hence the suggestion for application of Kotter’s (1995) 8-step change model in various organisational contexts to enhance understanding of and build a greater knowledge-base in implementation of organisational change. This, it is hoped, will help organisations increase their success and effectiveness in implementing change. The research reported in this paper aligns NamPower’s implementation of organisational change to Kotter’s 8-step model as a way of identifying areas for improvement. Cognisance was taken of Alas and Vadi’s (2006) suggestion that serious attention be paid to the beginning of the implementation of change process: how to establish the need for change, how to motivate employees, and how to mobilize commitment to change.

### 3.0 Methodology

As indicated earlier, the evaluation reported in Richesin (2011) to a large extent provided the methodology for this study. The study adopted a mixed research design, so both qualitative and quantitative data were used. Interviews with various staff members of NamPower were conducted using a survey questionnaire that had both closed- and open-ended questions. Kotter’s (1995) 8-step change model provided the basis for many of the questions in the questionnaire. Responses to the closed-ended questions were captured in a 5-point Likert scale, which ranged from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’.

The initial plan was to draw a reasonably random sample made up of management, supervisory, clerical and technical staff members of NamPower. However permission was not given for interview of management staff, so the sample interviewed consisted of supervisory (35%) clerical (45%) and technical (20%) employees. Only parts of three days were allowed for the interview, which restricted the number of interviews that could be conducted and thus the sample size, and so

suggestions on how to determine sample size to give some specified confidence level (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013, p. 266-7) could not be applied. Sixty (60) questionnaires were issued out to NamPower staff members who were on hand during the three-day data collection period – convenience sampling (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013, p. 252) – and 42 questionnaires were returned – a return rate of 70%; two questionnaires were incorrectly completed so the 40 correctly completed questionnaires were analysed, using descriptive statistics, tables, percentages and text analysis.

#### 4.0 Results and Discussion

The small sample size forced a modification of the presentation of the results – the information captured in a 5-point Likert scale are presented here in a 3-point Likert scale – merging the “Disagree” with the “Strongly Disagree” and the “Agree” with the “Strongly Agree”. The results are presented and discussed below in two sub-sections.

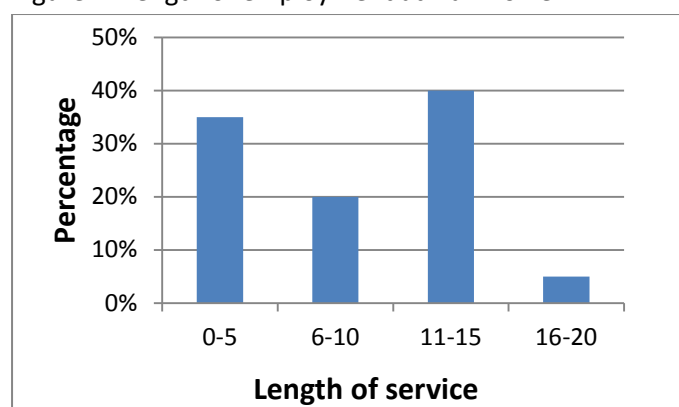
##### 4.1 Demographics

Though the convenience sampling method was used for data collection, the demographic characteristics of respondents turned out to be reasonably well-balanced: 60% of respondents were female and 40% male; 17.5% in the 21-30 age group, 62.5% were in the 31-40 group, and 20% in the 41-50 group. Therefore, in terms of gender, female voices were loud and clear; and the age distribution was approximately normal – with a good mix of youth and experience – which simplifies statistical inference

Educational qualifications of respondents were high enough for them to understand the issues on organisational change. About 90% of respondents have obtained some academic qualification after high school. An impressive 50% hold Bachelor degrees, 10% hold Honours Degrees, a further 10% hold Masters Degrees, and only 10% had senior Secondary Educational qualifications. No worker in the sample had below secondary school education.

Length of employment at NamPower is another important factor that could influence the usefulness of perceptions of respondents on implementation of organisational change. Figure 2 summarises the information provided.

Figure 2: Length of employment at NamPower



The length of service of members of the sample presents a useful mix: about 5% of the workers are real old-timers with over sixteen years of work experience at NamPower; and while the modal length of service is in the 11-15 range or around 13 years, more recent recruits with less than five years' experience also feature prominently in the sample. The average length of employment of the sample is 8.6 years, which is long enough for useful perspectives to be provided on organisational change.

#### 4.2 Workers' Perceptions of organisational change effort

The extent to which workers in an organization are sensitised towards change is important for successful implementation of change; the more sensitised they are, the more readily they adopt the change mentality, which then makes them more prone to support change (Smith, 2006; Alas, 2007). The study sought to sample the opinion of the workers at NamPower on the extent to which they were sensitised about the change and the benefits that will accrue to them from change, and their view on whether the management style and its strategic emphasis support change.

**Table 1: Worker perception of change efforts**

<b>Worker perception of change efforts:</b>	<b>Disagree (1)</b>	<b>Neutral (2)</b>	<b>Agree (3)</b>	<b>Average score</b>	<b>Total respondents</b>
A) Change is often discussed	9	3	28	2.48	40
B) Most of my peers embrace the change efforts	10	0	30	2.50	40
C) Often encouraged by leaders to support the change.	16	1	23	2.18	40
D) Have the necessary time and resources been given to implement change-related decisions?	15	4	21	2.15	40

Almost a third of the NamPower workers sampled either does not agree or is not sure that change was discussed. As a result a not insignificant proportion of workers were not brought onto the bandwagon to embrace and support the change efforts, which could threaten its success. As a precaution against this, Kotter (1995) emphasises the need for leaders to sensitise the organisation on the significance of change and on the necessity for change, providing reasons why the status quo is no longer adequate for long-term survival and thus the need for a new approach. This will make change more inclusive (Alas and Vadi, 2006). Also, the responses show that the management of NamPower has not always provided the funding needed to keep the change on course. For the change effort to be successful the funds necessary to implement change must not only have been sourced; the workers should see that the change efforts are being well funded for them to expend

their energy on the change. Further, it is important to establish whether workers see where the change will take the organisation and what will be in it for them. Table 2 provides some insight on the extent to which workers understood the vision for change.

**Table 2: Workers' understanding of the vision for change at inception**

Understanding of vision for change	Disagree (1)	Neutral (2)	Agree (3)	Average score	Total respondents
A) Clear reasons for change are communicated.	13	1	26	2.33	40
B) The urgency around the need for change is communicated.	9	1	30	2.53	40
C) The benefits of change are frequently communicated.	24	2	14	1.75	40
D) The reasons for benefits from change are not clear	20	1	19	1.98	40

Table 2 shows that even some of the workers who heard discussions on the change efforts did not fully grasp the reasons for the change and so may not see the need for urgency. Also, workers are more likely to commit to change if they see how this will benefit them. With an average score of less than two, the staff members of NamPower as a whole do not see the benefits that will accrue to them from change nor do they see what will generate the benefits. This could dampen their enthusiasm about the change effort.

**Table 3: Worker Perception of NamPower Management Style**

Management of NamPower is:	Disagree (1)	Neutral (2)	Agree (3)	Average score	Total respondents
A) caring and develops employees	10	3	27	2.43	40
B) encouraging, risk-taking and innovative	15	3	22	2.18	40
C) enforcing rules	9	0	31	2.55	40
D) encouraging staff to meet the company's objectives	8	3	29	2.53	40

Workers' perception of the alignment of management style to change efforts is important in boosting their morale for change (Alas, 2007). Scores for the main components of management style are well above two in Table 3 – an indication that the workers believed that NamPower's management style was attuned to the change efforts; this should make the workers want to support change. There is also evidence that the workers saw the management style as encouraging

teamwork and participation, on the one hand, and, on the other, competition and achievement. This would ensure healthy competition without rivalry. The management style also provided security and stability of employment. So even though the workers did not see financial benefits from the change efforts, their understanding and acknowledgement of these factors would drive their support of the change effort (Alas, 2007).

The workers also admitted to experiencing loyalty and mutual trust, to being committed to innovation and development and to placing emphasis on goals' achievement and winning. These perceptions of the workers show that management's strategic emphasis on cohesion, teamwork, boosting staff morale, whipping the competitive and winning spirit and promoting growth and development caught on with the workers. These factors that promote cohesion and demonstrate commitment of staff to the change effort should contribute to its success. All these factors received an average score of around 2.4. However, the workers did not feel that management encouraged **individual** risk-taking (average score of 1.9), an important factor in taking advantage of perceived opportunities with uncertain future returns, and so necessary for the success of change initiatives (Kotter, 1995, 1996).

Kotter's (1995, 2007) 8-step model includes planning for and creating short-term wins as a way of motivating workers to support change. This means that workers' perception of the extent to which the reward system in an organisation implementing change is geared towards supporting the change efforts is important in boosting their morale for these efforts. Table 4 shows that the workers of NamPower did not see the organisation's reward system as being fair (average score of 1.8) because it did not seem to be based on the rank of workers (average score of 1.95), but agreed that it may be based, to some extent, on individual's initiative and effort (average score of 2.13) and achievement (average score of 2.18).

Workers are more likely to embrace change heartily when they see management's support for the change efforts; that management invests time in and is committed to leading and supporting the drive for change. With an average score of 2.2 in Table 4, NamPower's workers do see management's support for and commitment to the change process; and though they had complained about funding, they do seem to agree that management provides training and resources (non-financial) to implement change (average score of 2.4). They were however not very convinced that management empowers and allows staff members to initiate change (average score of 2.05), which would suggest that management keeps a tight grip on the process, which could raise serious questions about ownership. Workers will usually be more enthused about change when, in their opinion, management uses the right people in driving change. The NamPower workers do not see management using the right people to drive the change (average score of 1.68). The workers feel that those who were given the opportunity to lead the change initiative were not necessarily those whom they had known to have demonstrated capacity for such leadership (Sidorko, 2007), but those who for whatever reason found favour with management. Favouritism and nepotism could dampen enthusiasm towards change.



**Table 4: Workers' perception of managements' support for change**

Management's support for change	Disagree (1)	Neutral (2)	Agree (3)	Average score	Total respondents
A) Management invests time and commitment in leading and supporting drive for change.	16	0	24	2.20	40
B) Management does involve the right people in driving change	25	3	12	1.68	40
C) Management ensures that staff has the required skills and resources to implement change.	10	4	26	2.40	40
D) Management understands the impact of change on staff members.	24	1	15	1.78	40
E) Management does reward and recognise the extent of staff involvement in change initiatives.	22	3	15	1.80	40
F) Management involves, empowers and allows staff members to initiate change.	19	0	21	2.05	40

The feeling among workers that management does not seem to understand the impact of change on staff members (average score of 1.78) is another area of concern in Table 4 that management should give attention to for future change initiatives to be more successful. The planning of organisational change involves impact analyses on many areas, including staff welfare. Workers should therefore be made to feel that change will not impact adversely on their welfare; and an important welfare concern of workers is the impact of change on their remuneration. In this respect, Table 4 also shows that workers are not convinced that management recognises the extent of their involvement in change initiatives and rewards them accordingly (average score of 1.8).

The dynamic character of the globalisation-age commercial environment requires that organisational change be an on-going process (Egan and Thomas, 2005; Gilley et al., 2009; Appelbaum et al., 2012), which makes sustainability an important consideration. Sustainability of organisational change depends not only on the thoroughness of its planning and management's zeal in its implementation, but also on the overall attitude of workers towards change (Bălan & Jițu, 2009). Table 5 presents aspects of the attitude of NamPower's workers towards change that should be noted by management.

One of the fringe benefits of Kotter's (1995) change model is that it helps in nurturing in workers a positive attitude towards change. The model recommends not only the need to establish a sense of urgency about change, but also to create and communicate the vision for change. When this is done workers see the change initiative as necessary and are more likely to support it (Alas, 2007). The workers at NamPower do not only see the change initiative as necessary (average score of 2.33), but also see it as providing opportunities (average score of 2.35). This then makes them satisfied with

their work, knowing that it supports the change (average score of 2.48). Though they complained about the reward system, they could see that change has clear benefits for them and for the organisation (average score of 2.5), another testimony that the vision for change has been effectively communicated and so the values of the organisation are clear to them (average score of 2.4). It is therefore not surprising that they find the change initiative appropriate and necessary (average score of 2.7) Even though they may not share in selecting those who drive the change initiative and so may not feel involved in all aspects of the change initiative (average score of 1.7), they have opportunities to share in making other change-related decisions (average score of 2.25).

Though there are a few negative sentiments that should be given attention in future change initiatives, such as workers' claim that their feelings about change are not acknowledged (average score of 1.55), on the whole the attitude of NamPower workers towards change has been positive, which is important for success (Bălan & Jîțu, 2009). Table 5 shows among others that they are held responsible for the work of others (average score of 2.25), which promotes teamwork and so is essential for implementing change; they readily agree with change initiatives (average score of 2.25); they have not had negative experiences with previous change initiatives (average score of 2.38); and they even adapt easily to new ways of doing things (average score of 2.05)

**Table 5: Employee's attitude towards change**

<b>Employee's attitude towards change</b>	<b>Disagree (1)</b>	<b>Neutral (2)</b>	<b>Agree (3)</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Total respondents</b>
A) I find change initiatives necessary.	13	1	26	2.33	40
B) I see change initiatives as opportunities.	13	0	27	2.35	40
C) I am satisfied with my work.	9	3	28	2.48	40
D) I am involved in all aspects of change that affect me.	24	4	12	1.7	40
E) Change has clear benefits for me and for the organisation.	10	0	30	2.50	40
F) I find change initiatives appropriate and necessary.	5	2	33	2.70	40
G) Organisation values are clear.	12	0	28	2.4	40
H) I am held responsible for the work of others.	13	4	23	2.25	40
I) When a change effort is initiated, I definitely agree.	15	0	25	2.25	40
J) My feelings about change are acknowledged.	29	0	11	1.55	40
K) My ability to learn is appreciated.	12	3	25	2.33	40
L) I cannot adapt easily to new ways of doing things.	15	2	23	2.05	40
M) I participate in making decisions.	14	2	24	2.25	40
N) I have not had negative experience with previous changes.	11	3	26	2.38	40

## 5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper set out to explore the extent to which NamPower's attempt at implementation of major organisational change drew on the ingredients of the menu in the literature. A questionnaire administered to a convenience sample of NamPower staff provided the perceptions analysed in the paper. The exercise has identified both areas of strength, where implementation was not only aligned to the factors in the literature but also received endorsement from staff, and areas of weakness, where implementation somewhat deviated from the suggestions in the literature and also drew complaints from the staff.

One of the objectives of this paper is to determine whether the management of NamPower established the need and urgency for organisational change. The study showed that effort was made to communicate the need for change, but that this did not reach all staff members, as a considerable proportion was left out. There is need to increase the scope of communication in the next round of implementation. Also, according to the staff, the funds needed to keep change on course were not always provided. However, the workers are more liberal on management when the question is asked in terms of non-financial resources.

Another objective was to find whether and to what extent the management of NamPower motivated employees and mobilised commitment towards change. Kotter (1995) recommends assembling a group with enough power and influence to lead the change effort, that this group of leaders work closely with the other workers as a team, and thus become the conduit for motivation to reach all the workers. Though the literature does not recommend how these leaders should be assembled, attention was drawn to Sidorko's (2007) emphasis on leadership that has developed from experience as being essential in implementing a change initiative. A good way to put this into effect would have been for management to allow inputs from the staff in the selection of these leaders – to ensure their acceptance. However, the management of NamPower selected the leaders without any inputs from the workers, much to the chagrin of the latter who, therefore, do not see that management uses the right people in driving the change process. Despite this jerky start, which could have dampened the enthusiasm of the workers about the change process and compromised the role of the leaders as channels for motivation, teamwork has eventually been established and most of workers are committed to the change initiative.

The menu for change in the literature includes several ingredients. In the view of the staff of NamPower, the management provided a clear vision of where NamPower would be after change had been implemented. However, the (financial) benefits that will accrue to workers from change were neither discussed nor even communicated. This omission should be addressed in future change initiatives. Also, on the positive side, strategies were developed to guide workers towards supporting change: boosting of staff morale, security of tenure, teamwork and participation, competitiveness and achievement without rivalry – all ingredients from the change menu in the literature; but individual risk-taking, another important ingredient for making change successful, was not encouraged.

Further, NamPower's workers do see management's support for and commitment to the change process; and there was considerable agreement that management provides training and (non-financial) resources to implement change. The workers are however not very convinced that management empowers and allows staff members to initiate change, which would suggest that workers do not feel that they are given as much ownership of the process as they deserve. A not unrelated concern among workers is the feeling that management does not understand the impact of change on them – implying either that impact analysis was either not conducted or that its results were not communicated to the staff, which may explain why some workers claim that their feelings about change had not been acknowledged and so they do not feel as involved as they would have liked in implementing change in the organisation. The workers also feel that management does not recognise the extent of their involvement in the change initiative and so does not reward them accordingly. Recognising and rewarding employees' contributing to change is an important step in Kotter's (1995) 8-step change model.

Finally, NamPower's employees have a positive attitude towards the organisational change initiative: they see the change initiative as appropriate and necessary and as providing opportunities for them; they are satisfied with their work, knowing that it supports the change; even though the financial benefits have not been explained to them, they can see that change has benefits for them and for the organisation; they may not have participated in selecting the leaders among them who drive the change, but they see other opportunities to share in making change-related decisions, which contributes to their job satisfaction (Alas, 2007); and most of them have not had any negative experiences with previous change initiatives.

This paper has identified areas where NamPower's organisational change process were in line with the recommended practice in the literature and should be consolidated, and areas where improvements could be made for future organisational change efforts to have even better chances of success and should be noted. As NamPower's organisational change initiatives mature and become a regular part of their management routine, the organisation will be better placed to realise their vision about change and succeed in delivering the energy service that is vital for the nation to reach the socio-economic goals of Namibia's Vision 2030.

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