



## Journal of Managerial Psychology

Discontinuous change in the New Zealand police service - A case study

Michael Duncan Suchitra Mouly V. Nilakant

### Article information:

To cite this document:

Michael Duncan Suchitra Mouly V. Nilakant, (2001), "Discontinuous change in the New Zealand police service – A case study", *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, Vol. 16 Iss 1 pp. 6 - 19

Permanent link to this document:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/02683940110366542>

Downloaded on: 25 November 2015, At: 11:29 (PT)

References: this document contains references to 36 other documents.

To copy this document: [permissions@emeraldinsight.com](mailto:permissions@emeraldinsight.com)

The fulltext of this document has been downloaded 1051 times since 2006\*

### Users who downloaded this article also downloaded:

William Pullen, (1993), "Strategic Shocks: Managing Discontinuous Change", *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, Vol. 6 Iss 1 pp. - <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09513559310023563>

P.E.D. Love, A. Gunasekaran, H. Li, (1998), "Improving the competitiveness of manufacturing companies by continuous incremental change", *The TQM Magazine*, Vol. 10 Iss 3 pp. 177-185 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09544789810214828>

Thomas N. Garavan, Joe Deegan, (1995), "Discontinuous change in organizations. Using training and development interventions to develop creativity", *Industrial and Commercial Training*, Vol. 27 Iss 11 pp. 18-25 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/00197859510147607>

Access to this document was granted through an Emerald subscription provided by emerald-srm:478307 []

### For Authors

If you would like to write for this, or any other Emerald publication, then please use our Emerald for Authors service information about how to choose which publication to write for and submission guidelines are available for all. Please visit [www.emeraldinsight.com/authors](http://www.emeraldinsight.com/authors) for more information.

### About Emerald [www.emeraldinsight.com](http://www.emeraldinsight.com)

Emerald is a global publisher linking research and practice to the benefit of society. The company manages a portfolio of more than 290 journals and over 2,350 books and book series volumes, as well as providing an extensive range of online products and additional customer resources and services.

Emerald is both COUNTER 4 and TRANSFER compliant. The organization is a partner of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and also works with Portico and the LOCKSS initiative for digital archive preservation.

\*Related content and download information correct at time of download.



# Discontinuous change in the New Zealand police service

## A case study

Michael Duncan

*University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand*

Suchitra Mouly

*University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand, and*

V. Nilakant

*University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand*

6

Received December 1998

Revised May 1999/

January 2000

Accepted August 2000

**Keywords** *Organizational change, TQM, Police, New Zealand*

**Abstract** *In a country that has experienced over 15 years of politically driven change, the New Zealand Police Service (NZP) is now in the midst of an ambitious change programme called Policing 2000 (P2). Challenging traditional policing assumptions, P2 is a total quality management (TQM) approach that seeks alignment with an increasingly service orientated public by utilising state-of-the-art technology and strategic management practices more akin to the private sector. Reports on an exploratory case study that investigated individual anticipatory reactions to organisational change. The findings provide insights into the factors necessary for the implementation of a discontinuous change programme; namely alignment of vision, culture and implementation.*

The operational environment of organisations is constantly changing as customer preferences change and competitors develop to threaten or create markets (Hammer and Champy, 1993). Much has been made in the literature of the need for organisations to maintain alignment with this changing operational environment through the revision of strategies, structures and cultural norms. The private sector has responded to such pressures by focusing on a combination of customer, quality and cost reducing strategies (Mintzberg, 1996; Pullen, 1993; Meyer *et al.*, 1990). With a focus on the bottom line western governments too have responded to the increasingly changing environment by adopting a (conceptually) similar “market-based” approach to public sector administration (Mintzberg, 1996). With many public sector organisations now obliged to operate in a private sector manner – that is as “profit making” enterprises – New Zealand has been at the forefront of this global phenomenon of “corporatisation” (Boston and Holland, 1987).

Despite the unique nature and culture of law enforcement (Frewin and Tuffin, 1998) the New Zealand Police Service (NZP) has embraced the strategies and structures associated with the “market-based” philosophy. This has found its ultimate expression in a controversial change strategy called Policing 2000 (P2). A total quality management (TQM) styled programme, P2 was implemented to improve efficiency and effectiveness by transforming the Police from a “militaristic” to a customer focused “managerial” institution

through technological investment, cultural development and organisational delayering (Ten One, 1996, p. 8; Van Maanen, 1975). At an estimated cost in excess of NZ\$200 million and rising, change agents believe *P2* will lead to a revolution in policing, aligning the NZP's performance with changing private and public sector demands by promoting autonomy, flexibility, task simplification and waste elimination (Ten One, 1996, p. 8).

As a discontinuous change programme *P2* will see the structural, strategic and cultural re-creation of the NZP. The anticipation of such radical change has created a varied and intense reaction amongst front-line officers. Understanding that the success of a change initiative is ultimately reliant upon the alignment of an organisation's culture with strategic goals, this paper, based upon case study findings, explores how culture influences the acceptance of change (Isabella, 1992; Jick, 1993; Beer *et al.*, 1990; Isabella, 1990; Hage and Aiken, 1970). Acknowledging that police culture is unique in relation to other public services we utilise Kanter *et al.*'s (1992) organisational change model and from case data identify themes that suggest change initiatives must acknowledge three critical relationships to remove cultural change barriers:

- (1) the vision-implementation linkage;
- (2) the vision-culture linkage; and
- (3) the culture-implementation linkage.

The findings provide an insight into the factors necessary for the implementation of a discontinuous change programme; namely alignment of vision, culture and implementation.

### Methodology

Yin (1994, p. 3) asks the question "when and why would you want to do case studies on some topics?". The defence lies with the appropriateness of the methodology in relation to:

- the motivation and purpose for the research;
- the researcher's ability to control variables;
- temporal factors; and
- the subject under examination (Yin, 1994, p. 4).

The aim of this study was to present an insider view of a rapidly changing contemporary organisational context to further understanding of the variables influencing change programmes. To this extent this study, like most qualitative research, did not focus on the issues of generalisability but on how closely the reality of the respondents is represented. Second, one could question the relatively small sample size of this study and view it as a weakness. While a sample size of nine seems small for an empirical piece of research, we argue that as an exploratory study that seeks to describe aspects associated with the uncertainty of "anticipated" discontinuous change a larger sample size is not warranted. In addition two points must be raised; first we found that theoretical

saturation (the convergence of data around common themes) occurred following the completion of the nine interviews; secondly access to participants was difficult due to the irregular nature of police work (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Furthermore similar qualitative studies in this specific context with limited sample sizes are not without precedent (Frewin and Tuffin, 1998; Waldman *et al.*, 1998; Lester and Mink, 1979).

The identification and categorisation of the themes presented below arose from the application of a two stage data collection process (Yin, 1994; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). First a pilot study was conducted which allowed the refinement of technique and questions associated with the semi-structured interview methodology. Having confirmed the ability of this process to capture information a series of questions was finalised that sought answers to several aspects relating to reactions to organisational change including: What is your reaction to *P2*? Who will the changes affect and why? What are *P2*'s objectives? What have been your main sources of information about changes? Utilising this framework, a three week field research period followed in which nine front-line police officers based at a medium-sized metropolitan police station were interviewed. Each interview was conducted on police premises and lasted for approximately one hour. Participants represented a range of age, experience and ranks. No female officers formed part of the observation group, presenting a possible source for bias; however we believe that this reflects the masculine composition and focus of the NZP. The methodical rigor of data collection was ensured in three ways: all interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim, summary notes were taken during interviews and contact summary forms were completed that together systematically captured the qualities of each interview (Yin, 1994; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Miles and Huberman, 1984). On completion of the transcription process data was examined for (in)significant thematic (dis)similarities utilising within/cross-case analytical methods and coded along thematic lines (Morse, 1994; Yin, 1994; Miles and Huberman, 1984). This provided the basis for the iterative identification and classification of themes associated with organisational change which we present below (Miles and Huberman, 1984).

### **Thematic revelations**

#### *Divergent mindset*

Kanter *et al.* (1992) determined that "buy-in" at all levels of the organisation through the development of a shared direction and vision (or mindset) was essential for the success of change initiatives. In doing so, the organisation and individuals within it can share a common understanding of the motivation for and direction of change (Beer, 1990).

Evidence suggests that *P2* failed to capture the attention and imagination of officers by not appealing to a shared desire for change. Officers highlighted that a gap existed between:

- the "old" definition of organisational imperatives determined by cultural norms; and
- the "new" market and technological emphasis.

---

Thus *P2*'s philosophy and motivation appeared to officers as contradictory to the role and needs of policing:

Discontinuous  
change

... they've lost the original goals of the protection of life and property and the detection and apprehension of offenders, which is what the old I think oath you took when you signed up to be a policeman in the first place.

As a result of the embedded mindset, each officer failed to recognise possible benefits of *P2* and instead made repeated claims for "more cops on the street that's the only thing a front-line policeman wants to see"; "having bobbies on the bloody street". The interpretation of *P2* within this framework meant that officers were unable to identify how this change programme could be of benefit:

9

... we're trying to run using the business principles ... we differ from a business ... we aren't profit making - we're a public service.

... it's an odd sort of organisation, it's really hard to compare us to anything else ... I am doing my job if I don't have customers coming through the door.

The inability of *P2* to intuitively appeal to officers' values or redress the gap between "old" and "new" philosophy cultivated cynicism and scepticism systemic traits acknowledged as "a serious obstacle to reform" (Smith, 1998; Chan, 1996: 109; Van Maanen, 1973):

... scepticism and cynicism is a trait of the police ... it becomes a part of your persona ... you question everything ... it's just part of the policeman's personality.

Although participants expressed a desire for change, *P2*'s emphases were interpreted as being at odds with the extant culture and therefore undesirable:

They're [the changes] consistent with wanting to save money.

... shocking mistakes [have been made] because they haven't looked at the whole big picture.

... it's a fact that we're having to drop our staff levels down, and people really doubt that a reduction in numbers with more efficiency supposedly is going to be better for the police.

Change agents and recipients were interpreting operational needs and wants through conflicting mindsets. Although change at the front line was desired, front-line officers were unable or unwilling to re-align personal and cultural norms with those of change agents. The difference in emphases thus manifested itself as a negative reaction to *P2*:

... policing and police work itself doesn't really change - well it shouldn't change.

... your hard core business doesn't change, so your philosophy in general shouldn't change.

### *The past and credibility*

The hesitancy with which change was regarded by officers can also be attributed to the apparent failure of change agents to distinguish *P2* from past change initiatives (Kanter *et al.*, 1992). The primarily negative experience officers recounted of previous change programmes was projected directly upon *P2*. Consequently *P2* was labelled as "just another change programme" and "just another golden banana" and failed to elicit widespread participation and

support (Dunsing and Matejka, 1989). As a result the statements of change agents were taken with “a pinch of salt” and ongoing operational problems (predominantly technology, budget and staff related) were rightly or wrongly associated with *P2* which further entrenched scepticism:

Experience over 30 years has shown me that what is delivered is very rarely what is promised.

This pattern, exacerbated by a lack of shared mindset, led officers to question the credibility and motivation of change agents and consequently *P2*:

... [administration’s track record] just doesn’t give them any credibility.

This was further embedded by a perceived misalignment between *P2*’s vision and its implementation. For example commitment to staff was stressed, yet downsizing was undertaken to assist in paying for technology upgrades fundamental to *P2*’s implementation. Change agents rationalised this, highlighting the potential *P2* had for redressing current staff and resource shortfalls by improving efficiency and effectiveness. Although officers acknowledged technology might deliver efficiency gains, downsizing actions ran counter to the “old” definition of effectiveness:

... we’re having to drop our staff levels down, and people really doubt that a reduction in numbers with more efficiency supposedly is going to be better for the police.

... we’re told it will enable more people to be on the front-line – now I don’t know of a single policeman that believes that for a second, that’s a straight out lie.

Support for change was further undermined by significant cost overruns and delays associated with the new technology:

I think generally there’s perhaps a certain amount of scepticism about the whole project ... the fact that the amount of money that’s going into it and at this stage actually no benefits.

The lack of a shared frame of reference, the failure to sell *P2* and a discrepancy between action and word – as understood through the “old” mindset – meant “the administration” failed to earn credibility with officers. That many senior administrators had achieved their position not necessarily due to managerial skill but (in the tradition of police culture) through rank, seniority and length of service, generated further tension:

I don’t have too much faith in our administration – a lot of them were very good policemen but aren’t very good administrators.

... some guys who have been really good policemen, really good thief catchers, are bad businessmen – so they shouldn’t be made managers, they should be still catching thieves.

Furthermore the conviction that managers were removed from the demands of day-to-day policing (due in part to the police’s hierarchical structure) and therefore oblivious to real policing needs manifested itself as a lack of faith in management, their decisions and initiatives:

... [administrators] quite often haven’t worked on the street for 10-20 years, so how do they know? That’s what really pisses me off.

---

... people out there sometimes just get so far away from it when they get into an office job ... but you've still got to relate back to where the roots are.

This was directly reflected in *P2*'s evaluation:

I feel "the administration" has lost the plot a wee bit".

I think a lot of the stuff they seem to be worried about now seems to be driven by time sheets and the dreaded outputs.

The divergent mindsets had significant interpretative ramifications. The officers not only doubted the ability and credibility of "the administration", but the integrity, suitability and motivation of the entire change programme was also brought into question; "it's the cop on the street who is suffering again".

### *Urgency for change*

Although the urgent need for change had been communicated, the lack of visible progress of, and incentives to participate in, *P2* meant that general support for the programme as a necessary and viable method of solving policing problems was not forthcoming (Kotter, 1995; Kanter *et al.*, 1992). Primarily, officers could not envisage the nature of the job ("catching crooks") changing, with or without *P2*.

Things won't really change much ... [as] ... no matter what they put in place or how they do it or how much technology they bring in it's still gonna need a cop on the street to catch the bad guy – a computer hasn't got a long enough arm.

*P2* was not aligned with the "old" paradigm and implementation problems surrounding *P2* further compounded the scepticism and cynicism with which the programme was regarded. Until it impacted upon "real" police events *P2* was not considered a matter to be dealt with urgently and day to day events would take precedence over what were considered theoretical consequences of change.

### *Change process ownership*

The sceptic culture of officers, the power distance between the front line and change agents and a lack of immediate gains from the programme resulted in *P2* being considered a failure by front-line staff (Smith, 1998). This perception led to a sense of alienation amongst officers that in turn reduced personal consideration of, participation in and thus progress of the change process (Strebel, 1996 ; Kanter *et al.*, 1992). Consequently despite a desire for change – "we could be a hell of a lot better", "it's [change is] a good thing" – *P2* was generally ignored as it failed to appeal to the masculine and traditional role of "catching bad guys".

The "externalisation" of the change process (realising the need for change while resisting or ignoring change efforts) among officers was strengthened by the belief that change was inevitable whether involved in the process or not:

... it's a *fait accompli*, and as such we are just getting on with our job.

... [as] a policeman I've got better things to do.

... change is going to happen alright, and there is nothing I can do about it alright, even if I wanted to OK – so it's going to happen. So whether the thing is in a year's time or two years time or ten years time or whatever it is arrives on the desk then OK, I'll work it.

With its focus on contemporary management practices and technology, *P2* was regarded as a diversion from operational needs and failed to relate to needs of day-to-day policing:

... we've got policing to run, we've got better things to worry about than this thing – it's [instituting change] not a police job.

... you generally tend to leave it to somebody else you don't have really that much time to theorise ... you're just too busy yourself with your normal duties, and there's people employed full time to do this job – why shouldn't they be doing it?.

The tradition, hierarchy and masculine culture of the police meant that responsibility for the discussion and implementation of change was not taken on or "owned" by front-line officers, but by default left to "the administration".

#### *Communicating change*

Communication is a critical process that profoundly influences the interpretation of the feasibility, motivation for and consequences of change (Kanter *et al.*, 1992; Kanter, 1983; Azumi and Hage, 1972). Through clear, honest and regular communication, a shared meaning among stakeholders can be developed, personal compacts renegotiated, and a sense of urgency and ownership promoted (Strebel, 1996; Kanter *et al.*, 1992; Sims *et al.*, 1986).

Police change agents employed formal communication methods (memos, reports, seminars) to inform officers about *P2*. However although a large amount of official correspondence was made available, with no compulsion to recognise or assimilate the material such communication methods were proven ineffective:

[There's] very little information coming out.

... it's all very well sending people personal newsletters ... but then they've gotta be read as well.

Two major factors account for this. First, the lack of urgency and visible progress associated with *P2* led to the conclusion that the information available lacked applicability and interest:

... most of it is inconsequential.

... if it doesn't affect you, you disregard it – I mean you can't take on all absorb all the changes at every unit throughout the police.

Second, the failure of formal communication to account for the time demands placed upon officers provided justification for their ignorance of issues associated with *P2*:

... if I read every memo and every notice that came out I'd never get out on the street and do my job, and we are so short of front-line staff that I have not got physically enough time to read every bit of paper that's issued that I should read.



---

... having memos from headquarters ... people might just go “oh yeah” and tend to glance at it.  
... basically ... it’s like a book, you pick it up and look at the pictures.

Stressing traditional operational imperatives, officers desired clear and succinct information regarding the effects change would have on individual conditions, but were frustrated: “we’re not told exactly what the benefits will be”.

The inability of formal communication methods to account for operational constraints and cultural demands meant officers perceived a lack of detailed and continuous information. The resultant lack of knowledge amongst officers further increased the cynicism with which *P2* and “the administration” was regarded:

I really don’t have too much of a notion of it: There appears to be a certain lack of knowledge of local people of what is actually happening.

This communication breakdown – generally ascribed to a lack of planning and “communication at the majority of levels in the police” – led to the utilisation of rumour to learn, adapt and comprehend the nature of change (Isabella, 1990; Sims *et al.*, 1986). An inherent part of police culture – “the police is notorious for running on rumours” – rumour played a significant role in how officers learned of *P2* and its implications in place of more formal channels:

... rumour is where I’ve got all my info from.

... people know a lot of things through rumour and also because they haven’t found out a lot of what’s really happening.

... rumours are rampant and they strike fear into the hearts of people ... when you’re in the locker rooms and you hear people discussing the changes and what that might mean for the front-line, that’s I guess where you hear some things that are correct and some things that aren’t.

Regardless of accuracy, rumour allowed officers to remain “informed” and “get a bit of a notion” of what to expect. For some the level of unfounded speculation associated with *P2* bestowed credibility on rumours, one officer remarking “some of it must be based on fact”. Rumour had a substantially negative effect on *P2*’s assessment, increasing stress, anxiety and leading many to disregard the change programme and question the ability of change agents: “I don’t think they know themselves”; “they don’t really know”.

Communication played a critical role in the assessment and acceptance of *P2*. Despite the availability of educational material, formal communication methods failed to grasp the attention and imagination of officers that, when combined with an already cynical culture, delayed the institutionalisation of change (Kanter *et al.*, 1992).

### **Implications for change management**

Literature and experience has determined that several factors are key to the realisation of organisational change and research suggests it is possible to develop a series of factors universally necessary for its success. For example it

is generally acknowledged that a successful change programme requires strong leadership, a clearly communicated sequence of events and a swift break from the past (Strebel, 1996; Duck, 1993; Kanter *et al.*, 1992; Kanter, 1983). Our findings support this hypothesis. Although each officer's comments are not generalisable in this case of discontinuous change, the themes and issues raised allow us to understand the factors that contribute to how individuals perceive change initiatives. Adding weight to extant models, we can gain a greater understanding of how future programmes can anticipate reactions to, refine and develop the change process.

Our findings suggest that change managers must develop and align a shared mindset by communicating a vision that appeals to the organisation's culture. This in conjunction with visible results and consistent implementation can encourage a culture receptive to change. Consistent with the findings of Kanter *et al.* (1992) and others, recommendations for the implementation of change programmes can be deduced (Kotter, 1995; Kanter *et al.*, 1992; Beer *et al.*, 1990).

### *1. Institutionalise change through a shared mindset*

To enable the institutionalisation of change it is essential that leaders motivate and encourage ownership of the change process and outcomes. Failure to enrol and inspire individuals to acknowledge and accept the vision underlying a change programme profoundly affects the programme's acceptance and subsequent success (Kotter, 1995; Jick, 1993). To promote ownership the vision-culture link must be aligned at the outset through a process of consultation, ensuring that each "faction" can communicate through a commonly understood dialect (Kotter, 1995; Kanter *et al.*, 1992).

Our data supports this thesis with recurring thematic revelations indicating that the gap between the "old" and "new" mindset had not been bridged. Although P2 had formed a transition management team, regular widespread consultation and feedback was not forthcoming. Consequently the lack of dialogue reduced the understanding of the change programme and instead reaffirmed the power-distance and conflict associated with the "old" and "new" paradigm. Lacking a common understanding change agents failed to engage the emotions, imagination and participation of frontline officers (Kotter, 1995; Strebel, 1996).

### *2. Disassociate change from past efforts*

The ability of change initiators to separate a new change initiative from past efforts is vital to the acceptance of change and the renegotiation of personal compacts (Strebel, 1996; Kanter *et al.*, 1992; Bartunek and Moch, 1987). Change programmes must therefore avoid labelling a new initiative in a similar manner to the past, but instead capture attention by marketing the new programme as an innovative, relevant and sincere attempt to better the cause of the organisation and individual (Dunsing and Matejka, 1989).

---

In this case change agents had failed to convince individuals that the *P2* programme was distinct from previous initiatives. This failure, partly attributable to the methods of communication employed, allowed officers to develop their own perception of *P2* based upon previous experience and current schemata (Strebel, 1996; Bartunek and Moch, 1987). The inability of change agents to separate *P2* from the past meant that it was labelled as “another” change programme with little relevance to front-line officers, strengthening the cynical attitude with which the programme was viewed.

### *3. Develop a desire for change*

The creation of a sense of urgency for change plays a significant role in motivating individual action and developing a change receptive environment (Strebel, 1996; Kotter, 1995; Kanter *et al.*, 1992). This can be achieved by spreading dissatisfaction with the current paradigm through the organisation, creating a desire for change.

Our data suggests that there was neither a sense of need nor urgency for change within the NZP at the individual level. Urgency develops out of response to changes in the operating environment that threaten the organisation in some manner (Tushman *et al.*, 1986). As a necessary public service operating as a “monopolistic” government department the NZP was faced with no such threat. Therefore complacency and resistance to change was evident among individuals, making it difficult to transform both the mindset and culture of either the individual or organisation. The intent of *P2* was to radically change the way in which the organisation both viewed itself and operated, yet its long term and abstract aims failed to create dissatisfaction with the “old” mindset. Rather than the desired transformational change individuals focused upon the status quo, seeking tools and systems that would meet traditional policing “needs”. As a result there was no desire to accept what were viewed as unsuitable, unnecessary inconsequential changes of *P2*.

### *4. Develop change leaders*

To strengthen and indoctrinate the need for change throughout the organisation it is imperative that change be championed by a figurehead, supported by strong executive leadership (Strebel, 1996). Preferably accompanied by the introduction of “new blood” at the strategic level, a strong leader can promote a fresh organisational perspective, aligning the “new” and “old” by verbalising the vision and acting as a focus for (and focusing the organisation upon) change (Nadler and Tushman, 1990).

With the Commissioner of Police championing the change process, existing senior managers (in characteristic government department command-and-control manner) were charged with planning, promoting and implementing *P2* (Mintzberg, 1996). However our data indicates that the operational staff doubted the ability of NZP management to successfully implement change. Based upon the experiences of the past, individuals were unwilling to buy-in to *P2* as managers associated with the programme were the same as those

involved with past failures of change initiatives. Although the introduction of new blood might have alleviated this problem, the unique nature of the police culture would lead to the conclusion that the introduction of outsiders unschooled in the police culture might also have been met with similar or increased scepticism. We believe that only strong and forceful leadership could have minimised the obstacles that *P2* faced and developed a path that enabled the programme to rapidly progress.

#### *5. Align support and reward systems with change*

It is essential that an organisation's support structure and reward systems adapt to complement the "new" vision and display a sense of urgency. Procedural change forces the renegotiation of personal compacts and creates a context for change (Strebel, 1996; Kanter *et al.*, 1992; Bartunek and Moch, 1987). To uphold the change process managers must ensure that necessary support systems (training, remuneration) are in place to ensure the co-ordination and commitment of desired organisational competencies (Kanter *et al.*, 1992; Beer *et al.*, 1990, p. 160).

The NZP has frequently revised its remuneration policies. However with an emphasis on productivity new policies confused many, who saw this approach as counterproductive to the development of the desired service based culture. This belief was further amplified by a general absence of officer training and development associated with *P2*. This perceived lack of support when taken in conjunction with the inability of the remuneration system to reinforce the aims of change sent mixed signals, which further emphasised the cynicism with which the front line regarded *P2*. This illustrates that organisational change can only be successful if implemented at both the macro and micro level: at the macro through a collective vision; the micro through the implementation of aligned and quality measurement and training methods.

#### *6. Communicate change clearly*

Many problems associated with organisational change can be linked to communication. Inadequate communication (both transmission and feedback) limits the ability of individuals and change agents to reflect upon the consequences of change. This introduces uncertainty and stress to the workplace that, when added to the process of collective sense-making, creates rumours and opinions predominantly detrimental to the change process (Kanter *et al.*, 1992; Bartunek and Moch, 1987; Kanter, 1983; Azumi and Hage, 1972).

*P2*'s change agents utilised conventional written communication channels either for reasons of ease or there being little precedent for consultation in the NZP. Yet much of this material failed to capture the attention of participants as it neither accounted for time constraints nor carried perceived applicability (Strebel, 1996; Kanter *et al.*, 1992). With no compulsion to assimilate information, a knowledge gap developed that led individuals to base their interpretation of *P2* upon previous experience and rumour, a process that

---

resulted in apathy and cynicism. The inability of *P2*'s change agents to communicate effectively reduced their ability to inject urgency into the change process and led to the perception that there was little need or reason for change.

These findings highlight that change will only be embraced by individuals if communication can deliver factual and relevant information in a clear and appealing way (Larkin and Larkin, 1996). Utilising "informal" and direct contact often works best as it allows the delivery of information in a more personal manner that allows individuals to interact and take ownership (Larkin and Larkin, 1996). Effective communication allows change agents to gauge and address attitudes toward change, which can alleviate the development of anxiety and stress and promote the survival of a change initiative (Kanter, 1983). Furthermore, preparing the "critical mass" for change in this manner helps develop an educated and aligned understanding of the strategic objectives of a change programme which can reduce cynicism and rumour (Larkin and Larkin, 1996; Duck, 1993, pp. 117-18).

### *7. Change with consistency*

Finally for change to be widely accepted change agents must send consistent signals to the organisation, with each goal and action serving to reinforce the aims of the other.

The implementation of change within the NZP sent inconsistent signals to the individual. As *P2* ambitiously attempted to simultaneously introduce quality programmes and empowerment throughout the NZP it also set about down-sizing and restructuring the organisation. The inconsistency of action with word underscored the perceived lack of alignment between *P2*'s vision statements, actions and the "needs" of the organisation. As a result *P2* was sceptically relegated to the status of an *ad-hoc* process that could neither achieve stated goals nor serve to improve the current situation of the NZP. Although hopeful that *P2* would be beneficial, the failure of change agents to align the vision, culture and implementation process saw individuals question the ability, credibility and sincerity of "the administration". With little understanding of the implications that the development of *P2* would have for the future of the organisation and individuals the programme was relegated to the status of an insignificant "fad", further entrenching the cynical and sceptical response to change (Dunsing and Matejka, 1989).

## **Conclusion**

*P2* represents an ambitious change programme that NZP change agents believe will revolutionise policing. Its vision – to create a quality and proactive public service – may with time prove to have a positive effect on the organisation's operation and culture. However our findings indicate that *P2* has not captured the imagination and support of those most affected – front-line officers.

We believe that these individual responses to change add weight to the thesis of previous research (Kanter *et al.*, 1992; Beer *et al.*, 1990; Kanter, 1983; Kotter and Schlesinger, 1979). Our findings demonstrate that if change agents

fail to align the vision with the culture in a consistent manner through communication and leadership a change programme will be perceived as contradictory to the needs of an organisation – regardless of the organisational context (public or private sector). Without a shared desire for change at an individual and organisational level the individual perception that change will fail will override all positive aspects of a change programme and failure will emerge as a self-fulfilling prophecy.

### Postscript

*P2* was plagued by ongoing delays and problems (particularly technological) that resulted in a crisis in policing that included staff shortages attributed to stress and changes associated with *P2*. After the issue came into the public arena the *P2* programme was shelved, and many change agents including the Commissioner of Police resigned.

### References

- Azumi, K. and Hage, J. (1972), *Organizational Systems*, DC Heath and Company, Lexington, MA.
- Bartunek, J. and Moch, M. (1987), "First-order, second-order, and third-order change and organization development interventions: a cognitive approach", *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, Vol. 23 No. 4, pp. 483-500.
- Beer, M., Eisenstat, R. and Spector, B. (1990), "Why change programs don't produce change", *Harvard Business Review*, November-December.
- Boston, J. and Holland, M. (Eds) (1987), *The Fourth Labour Government; Radical Politics in New Zealand*, Oxford University Press, Auckland.
- Chan, J. (1996), "Changing police culture", *British Journal of Criminology*, Vol. 36 No. 1, Winter, pp. 109-34.
- Denzin, K. and Lincoln, Y. (Eds) (1994), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Sage, Beverly Hills, CA.
- Duck, J. (1993), "Managing change: the art of balancing", *Harvard Business Review*, November-December.
- Dunning, R. and Matejka, J. (1989), "Fad labelling: the curse that can kill organisational change", *Management Decision*, Vol. 27 No. 1, pp. 37-9.
- Frewin, K. and Tuffin, K. (1998), "Police status, conformity and internal pressure: a discursive analysis of police culture", *Discourse and Society*, Vol. 9 No. 2, April, pp. 173-85.
- Glaser, B. and Strauss, A. (1967), *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies of Qualitative Research*, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London.
- Hage, J. and Aiken, M. (1970), *Social Change in Complex Organizations*, Random House, New York, NY.
- Hammer, M. and Champy, J. (1993), *Reengineering the Corporation: A Manifesto for Business Revolution*, Harper Collins, New York, NY.
- Isabella, L. (1990), "Evolving interpretations as a change unfolds: how managers construe key organizational events", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 33 No. 1, pp. 7-41.
- Isabella, L. (1992), "Managing the challenges of trigger events: the mindsets governing adaptation to change", *Business Horizons*, Vol. 35 No. 5, pp. 59-66.
- Jick, T. (1993), *Managing Change: Concepts and Cases*, Irwin, Burr Ridge, IL.
- Kanter, R. (1983), *The Change Masters*, Unwin Paperbacks, London.

- 
- Kanter, R., Stein, B. and Jick, T. (1992), *The Challenge of Organizational Change*, The Free Press, New York, NY.
- Kotter, J. (1995), "Why transformation efforts fail", *Harvard Business Review*, March-April, pp. 59-67.
- Kotter, J. and Schlesinger, L. (1979), "Choosing strategies for change", *Harvard Business Review*, March-April.
- Larkin, T.J. and Larkin, S. (1996), "Reaching and changing frontline employees", *Harvard Business Review*, May-June, Vol. 74 No. 3, pp. 95-104.
- Lester, D. and Mink, S. (1979) "Is stress higher in police officers? An exploratory study", *Psychological Reports*, Vol. 45 No. 2, p. 554.
- Meyer, A., Brooks, G. and Goes, J. (1990), "Environmental jolts and industry revolutions: organizational responses to discontinuous change", *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 11, Summer, pp. 93-110.
- Miles, M. and Huberman, A. (1984), *Qualitative Data Analysis*, Sage Publications, Beverly Hills, CA.
- Mintzberg, H. (1996), "Managing government, governing management", *Harvard Business Review*, May-June, Vol. 74 No. 3, pp. 75-83.
- Morse, J. (Ed.) (1994), *Critical Issues in Qualitative Research Methods*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Nadler, D. and Tushman, M. (1990), "Beyond the charismatic leader: leadership and organizational change", *California-Management-Review*, Vol. 32 No. 2, Winter, pp. 77-97.
- Pullen W. (1993), "Strategic shocks: managing discontinuous change", *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, Vol. 6 No. 1, pp. 30-9.
- Sims, H., Gioia, D. and Associates (1986), *The Thinking Organization: Dynamics of Organizational and Social Cognition*, Jossey-Base, San Francisco, CA.
- Smith, M. (1998), "Culture and organisational change", *Management Accounting*, Vol. 76 No. 7, July/August, pp. 60-2.
- Strebel, P. (1996), "Why do employees resist change?", *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 74 No. 3, May-June, pp. 86-92.
- TenOne (1996), No. 113, March 22, Media Services Limited.
- Tushman, M., Newman, W. and Romanelli, E. (1986), "Convergence and upheaval: managing the unsteady pace of organizational evolution", *California Management Review*, Vol. 29 No. 1, pp. 29-44.
- Van Maanen, J. (1973), "Observations on the making of policemen", *Human Organization*, Vol. 32 No. 4, pp. 407-18.
- Van Maanen, J. (1975), "Police organization: a longitudinal examination of job attitudes in an urban police department", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 20 No. 2, June, pp. 207-28.
- Waldman, D., Lituchy, T., Gopalkrishnan, M., Laframboise, K., Galperin, B. and Kaltsounnakis, Z. (1998), "A qualitative analysis of leadership and quality improvement", *Leadership Quarterly*, Vol. 9 No. 2, pp. 177-201.
- Yin, R. (1994), *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.

**This article has been cited by:**

1. Joanne Murphy. 2015. Tracking change in Northern Ireland policing: temporal phases and key themes. *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management* **38**:1, 117-131. [[Abstract](#)] [[Full Text](#)] [[PDF](#)]
2. Saracha Chatthong, Manaswas Kovitaya, Mingkwan Kongjaroen. 2014. The Elements of a Learning Model to Enhance Service Mind of Thai Police Officer. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* **152**, 880-888. [[CrossRef](#)]
3. M. Pearson-Goff, V. Herrington. 2014. Police Leadership: A Systematic Review of the Literature. *Policing* **8**, 14-26. [[CrossRef](#)]
4. Isabel Metz, Carol T. Kulik. 2009. Making public organizations more inclusive: A case study of the Victoria Police Force. *Human Resource Management* **47**:10.1002/hrm.v47:2, 369-387. [[CrossRef](#)]
5. Juan José Tàri. 2006. Improving service quality in a Spanish police service. *Total Quality Management & Business Excellence* **17**, 409-424. [[CrossRef](#)]
6. Rune Todnem By. 2005. Organisational change management: A critical review. *Journal of Change Management* **5**, 369-380. [[CrossRef](#)]
7. Gwen E. Lock. 2003. "Living, valuing and sharing" – a case study of retaining IT professionals in the British Columbia public service. *Career Development International* **8**:3, 152-158. [[Abstract](#)] [[Full Text](#)] [[PDF](#)]