

RESISTANCE TO TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE: THE CASE OF THE UNUSED CALCULATORS

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Synopsis

This case offers students the opportunity to examine factors contributing to employee resistance to technological change and formulate plans for overcoming this resistance. It also allows students to anticipate and discuss the challenges that organizational newcomers may face when trying to introduce change to new work settings. Inez Figueroa is a junior mathematics instructor at the American School for the Deaf (ASD), a private high school for non-hearing students. Figueroa's passion was teaching mathematics using innovative learning technologies, and she had been hired by ASD to introduce new technologies that would help deaf students succeed in math and science courses. But her attempts to introduce a visually enhanced, technologically sophisticated calculator had been repeatedly criticized and rebuffed by senior colleagues and her supervisor. The widespread resistance to new learning technologies left Figueroa increasingly demoralized and questioning why she had been hired in the first place. Figueroa must decide (1) how she can overcome the faculty's resistance to new learning technologies and (2) whether she should even try.

Learning Objectives

The learning objectives of this case are:

1. To identify and describe the causes of resistance to technological change among employees.
2. To use the criteria explained in Roger's Theory of Innovation Diffusion to evaluate the speed and progress of technological adoption in the organization described.
3. To identify and anticipate resistance to and acceptance of technological change using the technology adoption life cycle.
4. To identify and explain how organizational factors, such as leadership, social and organizational norms regarding workforce diversity (specifically Deaf culture and ethnicity) and organizational culture, can contribute to resistance to change among employees.
5. To identify, analyze and recommend strategies for overcoming resistance to technological change.
6. To design an action plan for effectively overcoming resistance to technological change among employees.

Application

This case is most suitable for use in courses in organizational development, change management, and human resource development.

Key Words: Resistance to change, technological change, organizational development, change management, power and politics, organizational behavior, and human resource management.

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