UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Organizational Change

2526-2-F5701R009

Course title

Organizational Change Theory and Management

Topics and course structure

Developing advanced knowledge and skills in the change management field is crucial. Factors such as technological advances, digitalization, geo-political changes, increasing competitive pressures, the development of new organizational forms, Mergers & Acquisitions initiatives, regulatory reforms and globalization are creating – at the same time – opportunities and threats that organizations need to address if they are to survive and succeed.

The importance of change management implies that it is not only managers who have to be competent at identifying the need for change and managing it. All organisational levels – even with different roles and responsibilities – have to deal with the high degree of complexity imposed by each change management initiative. In other words, managers, professionals and employees have to be able to act in ways that will secure change, accepting that there is no single formula that can be applied to all organisations, at all times.
Organisational Change Management requires change agents to coherently manage the various dimensions of organisational functioning, integrating knowledge and skills developed in other courses, such as Organisation Design, Strategic Management, Human Resource Management, Operations Management, T&D Strategies and others. This is why this module is placed in an advanced position within the whole academic programme. Consequently, studying change management will provide you with an opportunity to reflect on what you have learned from other courses (and from your experience, where applicable).

The course analyses the meanings, issues, logic and dynamics involved in a process of organisational change with the aim of enabling students:
a) to perceive, measure and interact consciously with the complexity and multidimensionality that characterise organisational change;
b) to understand the specificities of different organisational contexts and – based on this knowledge – establish the

meanings and directions of necessary change; and
c) to develop the skills to perform the leadership and managerial functions necessary to conceive, design and facilitate its full and effective implementation.

Through the critical examination of theories, models and methodologies, the analysis and discussion of case studies of organisational change, a structured simulation and testimonials from experts, the course will focus on the many dimensions (cultural, organisational, individual, group and technological) involved in a process of organisational change, on the technical challenges and on the complex interactions between these dimensions. All the subjects are analysed along the following lines, which form the backbone of the entire course:

- The role of ambiguity and uncertainty in organisational change.
- Organisational change between planning and governance of emerging dimensions.
- The digital transition and the development of AI from the perspective of organisational change.
- Approaches to organisational redesign for managing tensions, dilemmas and paradoxes that arise during organisational change.

Objectives

The course aims to explore the theories, models and practices related to organisational change, providing a series of opportunities to apply the knowledge and models of analysis and intervention learned during the theoretical lessons. It is designed to help you to:

- recognize different implications arising from internally planned changes and from externally imposed changes;
- develop and enhance your investigative and diagnostic skills, so that you will be effective in assessing what is going on in organizations and what change is necessary;
- improve your awareness of all the issues related to each specific change initiative;
- improve your awareness of how people can facilitate or resist change, and consequently your skills in promoting initiatives for sustain motivation to change;
- develop your competence in planning change, on the basis of the diagnosis carried out;
- more in general, extend your ability to manage the technical side and the human side together entailed in each organizational change initiative.

In particular, the learning outcomes promoted by the course are outlined below.

Knowledge and skills

- The different types, meanings and perspectives of organisational change.
- The events, dynamics and issues that typically arise in the development of an organisational change process.
- The visible and hidden forces that influence the behaviour of individuals and groups during an organisational change initiative.
- The sensitivities and skills that need to be deployed by both “change agents” (with particular reference to managers, human resource managers, consultants and trainers) and “recipients” for effective organisational change management.
- Theoretical models, tools and methods for understanding, analysing, planning and effectively managing organisational change.

Application of knowledge and understanding

- To recognise the different implications associated with different types of change (from those promoted by internal factors to those induced by external factors, from those imposed to those participated in, from those

caused by crises to those anticipated, etc.).
- To set up and conduct organisational analysis and diagnosis initiatives aimed at gathering useful information for understanding the organisational dynamics at work and what change needs to be implemented.
- To recognise and assess the challenges associated with each specific change initiative.
- To define initiatives useful for promoting and sustaining motivation for change or the development of attitudes favourable to it;
- To develop a change plan based on accurate organisational analysis and diagnosis;
- To manage in a coherent and integrated manner both the technical and social aspects involved in any organisational change initiative.

Autonomy of judgement

- To exercise critical thinking with regard to organisational models and managerial choices, whether dominant, emerging or in the process of becoming established.
- To independently assess the human, social and ethical implications of strategic, managerial and operational decisions.
- To develop and propose original solutions in response to organisational problems, even complex ones, while respecting both organisational needs and people's well-being.
- To reflect on the evolution of one's professional profile within organisations and one's own characteristics.
- To act reflectively on one's professional actions and value experience and mistakes as opportunities for continuous self-development.

Communication skills

- To adapt their communication initiatives to different contexts and organisational sub-environments and to different professional figures, in order to ensure maximum effectiveness and clarity.
- To adopt the linguistic registers most consistent with the characteristics of the interlocutors (peers, managers, collaborators, stakeholders, experts outside the organisation).
- To listen actively, be oriented towards cooperation and integrative negotiation.

Learning skills

- To develop personal methods of reflective learning geared towards continuous improvement.
- To enhance self-training and professional development skills.
- To identify and exploit learning opportunities within work experiences and group processes.
- To promote and actively participate in shared organisational learning practices.

With regard to the key skills that characterise the profile of experts in training and human resource management, the course contributes in particular to the development of the following:

- Techniques for building positive training relationships and supporting staff development in organisations;
- Theoretical models, tools and methods of organisational analysis;
- Theoretical models, tools and methods of organisational change management;
- Cross-cutting skills, which are essential for working in dynamic, cross-functional and increasingly international contexts.

Methodologies

The course is mainly based on experiential learning methods, enriched and consolidated by theoretical learning sessions and reflective learning sessions, all carried out in person. This choice is motivated by the aim of the course, which is to promote the development of a solid and advanced theoretical, methodological and practical

preparation necessary to

- interpret, analyse and critically discuss theories, models and epistemological perspectives in relation to the various dimensions that characterise organisational change;
- conceive, design and manage organisational change programmes of any degree of complexity with professional awareness, method and rigour.

This involves promoting and supporting the development and consolidation not only of knowledge but also of skills - both disciplinary and cross-disciplinary - related to the professional role referred to in the course.

Therefore, the course is divided into:

10 lessons (53% of the course) consisting of 70% teaching and 30% interactive teaching.
The **lecture component** aims to share, in the form of lectures given by the teacher, theoretical and methodological frameworks, the state of the art of scientific research and applied management practices.

The **interactive component** takes the form of plenary discussions (often supported by instant polls, brainwriting techniques, cloudword generation, image metaphors, etc. using interactive digital tools) of scientific or current affairs articles, videos and podcasts, with the teacher acting as facilitator. It can fulfil three functions:
a) when placed at the beginning of the lesson, it serves to present, through micro-incidents, issues and contingencies on which the class is encouraged to collectively formulate and discuss interpretative hypotheses, possible courses of action and expected consequences;
b) when placed in the middle of the lesson, it serves to explore and discuss the theoretical and methodological issues presented (with the help of video talks by experts and scientific articles made available in the weeks prior to the lesson);

c) when placed at the end of the lesson, it serves to reflectively rework the experience carried out at the beginning of the lesson, dialoguing with the theoretical and methodological framework.

6 lessons (32% of the course) consisting of 30% teaching and 70% interactive learning.
The **interactive component**, which is prevalent in these lessons, involves role-playing or the analysis of complex business cases, first in small groups (4-6 members) and then in plenary sessions. The experience is carried out with the support of digital tools for collaborative work (shared concept maps, shared Kanban frameworks, SCAMPER templates, etc.), which facilitate the production of analytical output generated by the classroom without any direct intervention by the teacher. The same output is then refined, again in the classroom, during the plenary analysis in light of the discussion in which the teacher plays the role of challenging agent.
The interactive component of these lessons may also include testimonials from business experts on the topic of organisational change.
The **delivery component** fulfils two functions:
a) at the beginning of the lesson, it serves to recall or introduce theoretical and/or methodological elements and guidelines useful for role-playing or business case analysis;
b) at the end of the lesson, it serves to recall the associations between the theoretical and methodological elements and the aspects that emerged from the role-playing experience or business case analysis.

3 lessons (16% of the course) consisting entirely of interactive teaching.
These lessons, which take place at an advanced stage of the course, are based entirely on activities supervised by the teacher. They are designed to promote a direct, active and participatory relationship with both disciplinary knowledge and skills (setting up an organisational diagnosis, analysing quantitative and qualitative data, summarising, planning, monitoring, feedback, reviewing the intervention, etc.) and transversal skills (teamwork, including virtual teamwork, conflict management, negotiation with multiple actors, problem setting and analysis, interpersonal and institutional communication). The classroom, divided into work teams (4-6 members), is challenged with a two-phase organisational change simulation, with an output at the end of each phase. Each team receives personalised feedback at the end of each phase. In addition, the entire experience, which involves students for approximately two weeks, is evaluated in a reflective analysis carried out in a plenary session facilitated by the teacher.

Of the total 56 hours of teaching, 45% is delivered through traditional teaching methods (DE) and 55% through interactive teaching methods (DI). There are no exclusively lecture-based teaching activities. Lessons are held in Italian.

Accessibility to the course is facilitated by making digital teaching resources available to all students enrolled in the Moodle teaching environment through the e-learning platform. By contacting the teacher, targeted support can be provided for non-attending students and/or those with specific needs.

Online and offline teaching materials

Programme and references

1. Hayes, J., 2022 (Sixth Edition), *The Theory and Practice of Change Management*, Macmillan/Red Globe Press;
2. Two articles (please download them from Prometeo) to choose from the following:

- Bartram, T., Stanton, P., Bamber, G. J., Leggat, S. G., Ballardie, R., & Gough, R. (2020). Engaging Professionals in Sustainable Workplace Innovation: Medical Doctors and Institutional Work. British Journal of Management, 31(1), 42–55.
- Burton, R. M., Mastrangelo, D. and Salvador, F, (2014), "Big Data and Organization Design", Journal of Organization Design (Special Issue), Vol. 3, No. 1
- Choi, M. (2011). Employees' attitudes toward organizational change: A literature review. Human Resource Management, 50(4), 479–500.
- Chung, G. H., Choi, J. N., & Du, J. (2017). Tired of innovations? Learned helplessness and fatigue in the context of continuous streams of innovation implementation. Journal of Organizational Behavior, 38(7), 1130–1148.
- Clark, S.M., Gioia, D.A., Ketchen,Jr, D.J., Thomas, J.B., 2010, "Transitional Identity as a Facilitator of Organizational Identity Change during a Merger", Administrative Science Quarterly, 55: 397-438
- Fyke, J. P., & Buzzanell, P. M. (2013). The ethics of conscious capitalism: Wicked problems in leading change and changing leaders. Human Relations, 66(12), 1619–1643.
- Hambrick, D.C. and Lovelace, J.B. (2018), "The Role of Executive Symbolism in Advancing New Strategic Themes in Organizations: A Social Influence Perspective", Academy of Management Review, Vol. 43 No. 1, pp. 110-131
- Hanelt, A., Bohnsack, R., Marz, D. and Antunes Marante, C. (2021), "A Systematic Review of the Literature on Digital Transformation: Insights and Implications for Strategy and Organizational Change", J. Manage. Stud
- Hasle, P., & Vang, J. (2021). Designing Better Interventions: Insights from Research on Decent Work. Journal of Supply Chain Management, 57(2), 58–70.
- Isabella, L. A., (1990), "Evolving Interpretations as a Change Unfolds: How Managers Construe Key Organizational Events", Academy of Management Journal, Vol. 33, No. 1
- Kraft, A., Sparr, J.L. and Peus, C. (2018), "Giving and Making Sense About Change: The Back and Forth Between Leaders and Employees", Journal of Business and Psychology, Vol. 33 No. 1, pp. 71-87
- Lawrence, T., Suddaby, R., & Leca, B. (2011). Institutional Work: Refocusing Institutional Studies of Organization. Journal of Management Inquiry, 20(1), 52–58
- Lewis, M. W., & Smith, W. K. (2022). Reflections on the 2021 AMR Decade Award: Navigating Paradox Is Paradoxical. Academy of Management Review, 47(4), 528–548
- Luscher, L.S. and Lewis, M.W. (2008), "Organizational Change and Managerial Sensemaking: Working Through Paradox", Academy of Management Journal, Vol. 51 No. 2, pp. 221-240
- Michel, A. (2014). The Mutual Constitution of Persons and Organizations: An Ontological Perspective on Organizational Change. Organization Science, 25(4)
- Oreg, S. et al., 2018, "An Affect-Based Model of Recipients' Responses to Organizational Change Events",

Academy of Management Review, 43(1), pp. 65–86;
- Ramirez, M. F., & Islam, G. (2022). “Important for you to be there”: Employee activism and the dialectics of researcher–practitioner collaborations. Human Resource Management Journal, 1748-8583.12474.
- Sia, S., Soh, C. and Weill, P. (2016), "How DBS bank pursued a digital business strategy", MIS Quarterly Executive, 15, 105–21
- Smith, W. K., & Lewis, M. W. (2011). Toward a theory of paradox: A dynamic equilibrium of organizing. Academy of Management Review, 36(2), 381–403
- Soderstrom, S. B., & Weber, K. (2020). Organizational Structure from Interaction: Evidence from Corporate Sustainability Efforts. Administrative Science Quarterly, 65(1), 226–271.
- Sydow, J., Schreyögg, G. and Koch, J., 2009, “Organizational Path Dependence: Opening the Black Box”, Academy of Management Review, 34(4), pp. 689-709
- Thomas, R., Sargent, L.D., Hardy, C., 2011, "Negotiating Meaning and Power-Resistance Relations", Organization Science 22(1), pp. 22-41
- Tsoukas, H. & Chia, R., 2002, "On Organizational Becoming: Rethinking Organizational Change", Organization Science, 13(5), pp. 567-582
- Vial, G., (2019), "Understanding digital transformation: A review and a research agenda", Journal of Strategic Information Systems, 28, 118–144
- Waeger, D. and Weber, K. (2019), "Institutional Complexity and Organizational Change: An Open Polity Perspective", Academy of Management Review, Vol. 44 No. 2, pp. 336-359
- Wiedner, R., Barrett, M. and Oborn, E. (2017), "The Emergence of Change in Unexpected Places: Resourcing across Organizational Practices in Strategic Change", Academy of Management Journal, Vol. 60 No. 3, pp. 823-854

Assessment methods

English speakers: it is required to carry out an oral examination.

The examination will assess the following subjects:

- knowledge of the content (concepts, theories and models) covered and their interactions,
- the ability to critically rework both the teaching materials provided and (in the case of option 2) the scientific articles chosen,
- the ability to translate theoretical and methodological elements into design and application solutions,
- the ability to apply constructs, theories and models when designing change management initiatives
- formal disciplinary correctness, including the correct use of specific terminology.

Assessment will be carried out in accordance with the following level bands and in relation to the Dublin Descriptors listed in the ‘OBJECTIVES’ section above:

Not sufficient (0-17/30)

- Knowledge and understanding: superficial or confused understanding of the course topics. Lack of references to case studies and other teaching resources or inability to relate them to theoretical models.
- Application: poor ability to transfer knowledge to concrete organisational situations; descriptive and generic approach, lacking managerial or planning awareness.
- Autonomy and critical thinking: no personal elaboration; inability to recognise tensions and/or issues related to the governance of an organisational change programme.
- Communication: approximate, imprecise language. Confused and unstructured presentation. Inappropriate use of organisational terminology.
- Learning: lack of reflection on one's own role. Lack of awareness of the relational and organisational processes studied.

Satisfactory (18-23/30)

- Knowledge and understanding: general knowledge of the content, but with gaps or simplifications. Recognition of the main models and dimensions underlying organisational change, but difficulty in examining and discussing the details.
- Application: substantial adherence to what was proposed in the teaching without personal elaboration. Ability to link course concepts only to known or previously discussed examples and at a general level, with significant difficulty in proposing original analyses based on personal reflection and reworking.
- Autonomy and critical thinking: limited or partial personal elaboration of the content and perspectives proposed in the teaching programme.
- Communication: overall clear and coherent presentation, but with language and structure substantially in line with what was proposed in the teaching resources.
- Learning: sufficient ability to connect the course content to one's own experience or real contexts. Timid awareness of the professional dimension inherent in the management of organisational change programmes.

Adequate (24-27/30)

- Knowledge and understanding: confident knowledge of the content, with sporadic gaps or simplifications. Recognition of the main models and dimensions underlying organisational change, examined in detail with limited and localised inaccuracies.
- Application: personal elaborations on what was proposed in the course, but not fully developed. Ability to connect course concepts in depth to known or previously discussed examples, but only partial ability to propose original analyses of unknown examples and/or examples derived from personal reflections and reworkings of the teaching resources provided.
- Autonomy and critical thinking: fair or good ability to personally process the content and perspectives proposed in the teaching programme.
- Communication: overall clear and coherent presentation, the result of personal processing that demonstrates both a broad understanding of the topics and connections between the dimensions of organisational change discussed in class, and a personal analysis of the resources proposed.
- Learning: fair or good ability to connect the course content to one's own experience or real-life contexts. Initial awareness of the professional dimension inherent in the management of organisational change programmes.

Excellent (28-30 with honours/30)

- Knowledge and understanding: full, articulate and in-depth mastery of the topics covered. Ability to link theoretical models, tools and methods for understanding, analysing, planning and effectively managing organisational change in all its constituent dimensions and in their relationships. Ability to discuss and reason about the complexity of organisational change with ease, confidence and competence.
- Application: autonomy in the analysis of concrete cases and a proactive attitude. Relevant use of theoretical models to contemporary organisational scenarios. Ability to analyse cases and situations, even unfamiliar ones, methodically setting out a course of analysis even in hypothetical and scenario-based conditions.
- Autonomy and critical thinking: independent and original interpretation of organisational dynamics, contextual factors and contingencies. Critical thinking and ability to reflect on emerging tensions and paradoxes. Ability to position oneself with respect to alternative perspectives, arguing the reasons for doing so.
- Communication: fluent, precise language appropriate to the discipline. Well-organised, non-redundant presentation, with rigorous awareness of the context, theoretical constructs and the relationships between them.
- Learning: advanced ability to connect course content to one's own experience or real-life contexts. Full awareness of one's own educational path. Ability to view the organisation as a space for negotiating perspectives, perceptions and meanings, as well as for individual and collective learning. Non-superficial reflection on one's future role within organisations, particularly in the role of change agent.

Office hours

Office hours only by appointment, which you can book independently.

To book, simply follow the instructions on the page https://www.unimib.it/cristiano-ghiringhelli and choose your preferred time slot from those available. It is recommended joining the group indicated on the same page to receive notifications about new spaces becoming available for booking.

Programme validity

Two academic years.

Course tutors and assistants

Sustainable Development Goals

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING | DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH | INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE