



## **ARCHITECTING PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

for Enterprise Agility...

July 14 to 16, 2016,

NIMHANS Convention Centre, Bengaluru

### **Four 'I's towards an enabled workforce**

Enabled Workforce for Enterprise Agility

Paper ID: PMIBC\_16\_4\_005

Author: Mr. Chetan Bhandi

## CONTENTS

Abstract.....	3
Introduction .....	4
Details of the paper.....	5
Conclusion .....	14
References .....	15

## ABSTRACT

To achieve Enterprise agility, an organization's workforce should be up and running at all the time and that too in full throttle. To achieve that, the workforce need be well Informed, Involved, Inspired and Innovative. Employees should always be well informed on the goals, objectives, policies of the organization towards endorsing Agile methodology. Awareness at all levels and among all employees is the first key step towards achieving agility. Any decision small or big needs to be made available with employees first and before other stakeholders can pitch in. But awareness is just a first step, a sense of involvement and belongingness needs to prevail among the employees on the decisions taken by the organization. Employees at all level should get the representation and should be consulted for any key policy formation. They should lead the movement towards agility. The sense of belongingness automatically comes if the workforce is an inspired one. The top and middle level leaders should keep inspiring the employees in their span of control by leading from the front. They should induce confidence in the workforce. Well informed, involved and inspired workforce with a little bit of push can help organizations to gain an edge on the fourth I i.e Innovation to keep their competitive edge in the market. This paper will provide few techniques using which organizations can enable their workforce with three 'I's - involved, informed, inspired and in return gain the edge of innovation and achieve the success in Enterprise agility.

## INTRODUCTION

In today's dynamic business environment, to remain competitive and profitable, the large organizations are forced to make changes in their business goals, strategies and policies quite frequently mainly because of external factors like ever changing customer needs/wants, rapidly changing technology, and increasing competition. To keep abreast in aligning to the changes, an organization should make itself very agile. The organizations nowadays are adopting Agile methodology in executing their projects. Agile is fast, incremental, and oriented towards bringing the working product as soon as possible in front of the customer. Similarly Agility across the organization deals with how quickly an organization's workforce endorse the change and get enabled towards implementing the change. If the workforce or employees (both the terms 'Employees' and 'Workforce' will be used alternatively throughout the paper, but the meaning in the context of paper will remain same) are not convinced about the change, the endorsement doesn't happen smoothly and quickly, which may result into spending a lot of time and effort in convincing the workforce first and then enabling them towards endorsing the changes. This means the organization is not agile towards adopting the changes or in other words organizational agility is low.

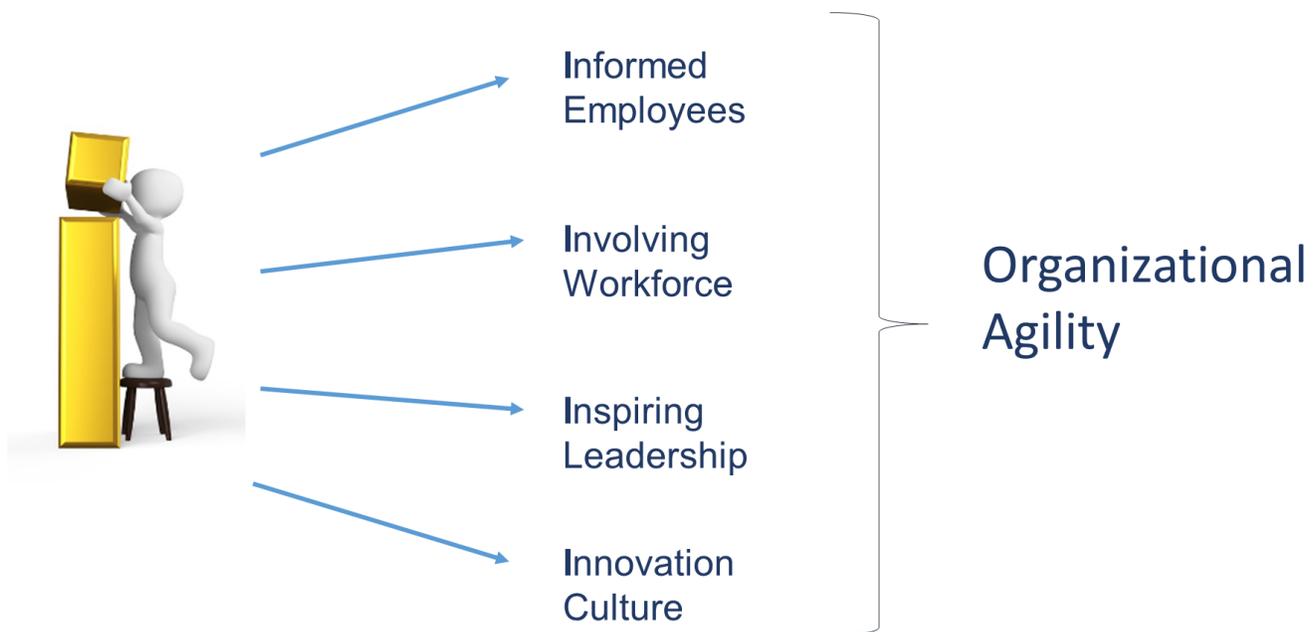
As the policies of an organization are formed by top level managers and executed by middle level managers, they need to make sure the workforce is always aligned towards the policies being framed and executed. It is their job as well as responsibility to take onus on enabling the workforce not only for the change in hand but also for the changes to be coming in near and far future. The DNA of the organization should be designed in such a way that the organization and her employees across all levels of organizational hierarchy (now onwards throughout this paper will be referred as just 'levels') are always agile and ready for any changes happening. It is easier said than done but definitely an organization with the help of able leadership can evolve itself into an agile organization by bringing in a framework to deal with changes. The proposed Four 'I' concept in this paper can help organizations to set up such framework and achieve greater Organizational Agility.

Informed employees, Involving workforce, Inspiring leadership and the spread of Innovation culture across all the levels form the four 'I's of the proposed "Four 'I'" concept.

## DETAILS OF THE PAPER

As Aaron De Smet from McKinsey's Organization Practice defines<sup>1</sup> – “Organizational Agility is the ability of an organization to renew itself, adapt, change quickly, and succeed in a rapidly changing, ambiguous, turbulent environment. This is the ability to be gained by all employees across all the levels in an organization.” Throughout the paper we will use the generic term **change** for the steps taken by organization to respond to various factors.

To achieve the Organizational Agility the organization setup should be having well informed employees, involving workforce, inspiring leadership and innovation culture which gives the competitive edge.



**Figure 1 - Depicting 4 'I' for Organizational Agility**

### 1. First I - Informed Employees

The first and foremost step towards achieving agility is keeping the workforce well informed. As soon as a change gets endorsed by the top management in an organization, the thing to be done from their side is to get the change well-articulated. The articulation should include – Why the Change (reason for the change), objectives of the change, organizational goals expected out of that change, what benefits the change is expected to bring to the customers, employees and other stakeholders, what are the short/long term impacts the change is going to bring specifically to employees in very unambiguous terms. The clear articulation will act as a show of intent from top management on how they are going to approach the change.

After the articulation of the change, without any further delay the communication rollout needs to be planned. The delay in communicating a change may lead to a risky proposition. Before formal communication if the news gets spread about the impending change through unofficial means, the employees may become suspicious. They may start looking at management with doubt and may start asking lot of uncomfortable questions and there is a chance that their productivity and performance may get affected. Hence multiple channels need to be identified as soon as possible for disseminating the information across all the levels so that all the employees are informed about the change through –

- Sending communication through emails
- pasting the information item on notice boards
- putting the information on company portal/intranet
- publishing on newsletters
- conducting awareness sessions
- promoting flash mobs
- Online or offline Q&A sessions



Figure 2 – Depicting various information channels

The information should be very clear, easy to understand, preferably customized for each level of employees, and should be comprehensive enough to include everything associated with the change. There should not be any room for hidden clauses and derivatives for the information items being disseminated. In my own experience, I have seen when a change is communicated, the presence of any open and ambiguous statement/note makes employees sceptical and they start assuming about the consequences mainly when the statement/note is related to employees and their performances. In that case before the employees getting more suspicious, the top management and HR personnel dealing with that change should quickly address the open/ambiguous statement/note and make things as clear as possible.

If needed, more Q&A sessions and Workshops to be conducted preferably in the presence of policy makers in addition to the publication of detailed information catalogue and FAQs with various examples and scenarios wherever applicable.

Organizations can't afford ill-informed employees as they can become a danger and may lead to a dissatisfied workforce which can resist the change, obstruct the implementation of change or in the worst case leave the organization. On the contrary, well informed employees will get convinced soon and start showing their involvement towards the change which is our second I of the Four 'I' Concept.

## **2. Second I - Involving Workforce**

Effective information dissemination as a first step will help creating enough awareness among employees about the situation and the change being endorsed by their organization. Next step would be to involve the employees in the change process. Organization needs to identify employees who have understood the change completely in the first step of awareness creation. Identification of such employees can be done either through calling for volunteers among them, or through online quizzes or tests about the change, or taking the help of project managers who can identify among their project team. Such identified employees should be given the responsibility of spreading the change to their fellow colleagues. To help them fulfil this responsibility, they can be given "Train the trainer" or "Enabler" kind of sessions. By this move, most of them will feel involved and they will be more than ready to help their colleagues understand the ongoing change. In a way they will become the next level change communicators.



**Figure 3 - Depicting employees communicating change to fellow employees**

The communication from those identified employees need not be formal. On the contrary, the word-of-mouth communication often proves well in spreading the information. Slowly some of those identified employees should be encouraged further to get involved actively in the subsequent steps of change. Organization should find such employees at all levels and provide all the necessary information and support they would be requiring. The participating employees should be rewarded appropriately for promoting the change effectively in their respective levels. This creates positive environment among employees about the change and in a way they will feel involved in the strategies adopted by the company. They will not see a change as an imposed one but as an owned as well as useful one for the company.

### **3. Third I - Inspiring Leadership**

After making Employees informed and involving some of them, the next step would be to inspire them to adopt to the changes so that they can start working towards the new organizational goals. Unlike Involvement part where the identified employees across all levels were disseminating the information, here the leaders – top or middle level managers should take initiative to inspire the employees. It should start with the top most level with CEO addressing employees at all the branch offices about the changes and the way the organization is heading towards adopting the change. This should be followed by a written message (email or personal letter) from CEO inbox/desk to all the employees, video address from CEO to the employees working in remote locations or customer sites. The CEO address should be full of encouraging words and he/she should dedicate most of the part towards how the contribution of the employees would be helping the organization to achieve the new goals the change is bringing. The address should also highlight the impact of the changes towards employees and their well-being.



**Figure 4 - Depicting inspirational address from leadership**

CEO address can be followed by various department heads' address to their respective department employees which can highlight more on the impact the organizational changes would be bringing to their respective departments. HR managers can also address the employees in their respective locations and provide more insights about the changes and they can keep their address totally with respect to the Employees' standpoint. HR Manager can provide some illustrations and arrange for some role plays so that the employees can visualize and get keener to endorse the changes. In addition to these top leaders' addresses all the Project Managers can be given special orientation sessions so that they can further inspire their project members to work towards adopting the changes. Also few influential employees can be identified (similarly as explained in involvement part) who can wield their Expert power to inspire larger employees about the changes. In addition to all these addresses and orientation sessions - quiz competitions, collage competitions, puzzles need to be organized for highlighting the changes and employees performing well in those competitions need to be rewarded with attractive goodies.

The leaders who are addressing or conducting awareness sessions should make sure that they always speak with inspirational words and not only that they should frequently showcase their part also on how they are working from their individual point of view towards achieving the new goals. For e.g. a department head can

Speak to the employees of his/her department about one or two among the goals which have been set for him/her. He/she can speak about how he/she would be approaching to achieve the same from his/her individual stand point and what all activities he/she has planned to perform so that he/she can inspire his/her department workforce to achieve those goals. A Department Manager can say he/she would like to spend a full day reviewing each project comprehensively including addressing the project workers' needs once in a month. This will definitely infuse enthusiasm in all project teams as they would be curious on how their department lead will be doing the review. They would like to give the best from their side. Also they will be eager in taking their concerns directly to department head and also hopeful on seeing them resolved. Such acts will go a long way in inspiring lower level employees.



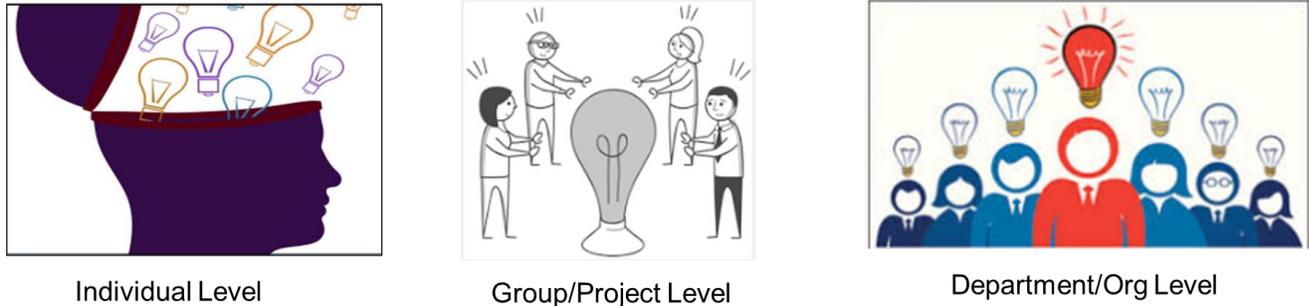
**Figure 5 - Depicting inspirational talk**

#### **4. Fourth I - Innovation Culture**

Successful implementation of all those three 'I's will bring us to the most important fourth I which can give the competitive edge to the organization – Innovation. To implement the change successfully, achieve the new goals and gain the competitive edge on the competitors, the organization should endorse and encourage innovation at all the levels. Innovation can be anything - from a small process change to bringing in automation to one of the largest functions which will be helpful towards achieving organizational goals. Also the Innovation culture needs to be encouraged at all the levels.

To achieve that an Innovation framework needs to be built in which a proper template needs to be framed to capture the innovation. The template can be a simple word/excel/presentation file or a more structured package. A solid review team (constituting the experts in the domains/technologies the organization is operating) needs to be formed to accept and review the innovative ideas generated in the organization. The

innovation can be done at any level and of any magnitude – small impact to large impact. Employee level wise the innovation can be performed as follows



**Figure 6 - Depicting Innovation at multiple levels**

- Individual level – Here the innovation ideas are proposed by individual employees and the ideas can be of individual's interest irrespective of project, department or level.
- Group level – Here the employees can form groups across projects or across levels and suggest new ideas which may impact one or more projects or entire organization.
- Project level – Here the employees working in a project can come up with innovation ideas which can help in their respective projects.
- Department level – Here the employees belonging to a particular department can work together to bring an innovative idea which can help throughout the department.

The innovation window should be kept open all the times so that idea generation is continuous. But the idea generation should be strictly documented in the framed template to maintain uniformity and achieve ease of review. The review committee should acknowledge all the ideas and can call for a review meeting once in a month/quarter to review the generated ideas in that period. During the review meeting they can segregate the ideas – Feasible or non-feasible, Process change or Automation, Implementation done at individual/project/group level or at corporate level. The outcome of the review of each idea should be communicated to the idea generator highlighting all the points. If needed changes need to be suggested from review team so that ideas can get better. The best innovative ideas which are in line with the new organizational goals need to be encouraged further and planned/pushed for implementation.

Once idea goes to implementation, the report on the impact created, mainly highlighting the revenues and other benefits should be published frequently. If the idea is long running then cumulative benefits accumulated over a quarter or a year can be captured and published in appropriate forums. Both idea generator and idea implementer need to be rewarded accordingly. The entire story should be published across the organization through newsletter or email communication. This will encourage other employees

to come up with more innovative ideas. If the organization is successful to continue this cycle of Four 'I's then its Organizational Agility level will always remain high.

The concept of Four 'I' appears to be very generic and simple, and yes, in a sense it is mainly related to behavioural aspect of organizations rather than any technical or domain oriented. The concept is applicable at all times – Well informed and involving employees will help keeping the productivity level high, Inspiring leaders form invaluable assets and ever running Innovation culture will act as a growth engine for an organization. But application of Four 'I' concept is not easy also as it requires sufficient investment and commitment from the organization and willingness from its employees. Organizational Agility is not a one dimensional phenomenon, it is achieved only when both Organization decision makers and employees are in unison to adopt the changes the organization has to undergo due to the external factors. Four 'I' concept provides the perfect platform for achieving the same as it demands involvement from all levels of employees in the organization. Also applying the concept of Four 'I' is not a one-time activity, it needs to be made a part of an organization's constitution. If imbibed in the culture of the company it will act like an ever running engine, go a long way to keep the organization agile and ever relevant in the event of any changes in the journey of organization. In a way we can say a framework for dealing with any changes the organization endorses.

### **Advantages**

Continuing the discussion on usefulness part of Four 'I' concept, let us collate the advantages an organization will receive by applying it –

- Increased trust between management and employees – In the change adoption process since the employees get the information at very early stages in a well-defined and unambiguous manner the employees will not look the decision with suspicion.
- Involvement of employees in implementing the changes will fasten the process of bringing organizational changes – involving employees will act like change agents and help in spreading the information of change effectively.
- Increased trust and involvement of employees in implementing the changes will help reduce the attrition – employees will not feel insecure and threatened by the change if they get the complete information on the impending change and expected role from their side.
- Application of Four I concept needs active involvement from middle level managers (Project Managers, Influencing Leaders among employees) who act as interfaces between top management and lower level employees. In a way it gives an opportunity for the organization to develop the leadership skills among those employees which in turn will help in preparing the next rung leaders of the organization.

- Developing innovation culture will help in generation of lot of ideas at any point of time. For an organization having large workforce say in thousands, there is a practical possibility of getting 100 new ideas generated every month. Out of 100 if as small as 10 ideas are marked as feasible and implementable towards the impending changes, then also the organization will find a way to remain competitive.

### Challenges

The Four 'I' concept is not devoid of its share of challenges, especially for a large organizations. Some of them are listed as follows

- The application of Four 'I's is a change in itself. However this is a change related to organizational behaviour and culture. It may take significant amount of time and effort to imbibe this culture.
- Application of Four 'I' concept is a continuous activity, hence it needs continuous encouragement mainly from top management. The change in leadership at top level should not affect the Four 'I' culture. The new leadership should endorse the Four 'I' culture to keep continuing the good work. Similarly when a new employee joins the organization his/her induction kit/programme should have the detailed orientation about this culture. From the day one he/she should be made a part of Four 'I' culture.
- The Four 'I' concept needs to be revisited once in a year and if needed necessary tweaking should be done considering the factors applicable at that point of time.

## CONCLUSION

In the current complex, rapidly changing business environment, organizations are forced to implement changes to keep pace and stay relevant. Success in implementing changes depends how good the Organizational agility a firm possesses and nurtures. Four 'I' concept will help organizations achieving that agility if they apply it effectively with full support from top management and all other level of employees. The concept can be implemented like a framework which can guide the organization to face any changes happening in future. Also the concept is very simple, generic and mostly related to behavioral aspect rather than any domain or technical aspect. With the help of some tweaking whenever necessary, the concept can be applied any time, in other words it will remain relevant for future times also. Apart from providing framework for dealing with changes, the concept brings advantages like increased trust between management and employees, increased involvement from employees, decrease in change implementation time, decrease in attrition, and a much needed innovation culture. Continuous innovation can keep the organization ahead of their times and also can help gain edge in the market competition and can further help organization achieve the status of market leader in this industry segment. Though application of Four 'I' has its share of challenges mainly in preparing both the management and employees to align towards that, but with willingness and continuous encouragement from top management it can be successfully implemented. The successful implementation of Four 'I' go a long way in ensuring higher Organizational Agility.

## REFERENCES

The paper is very generic and conceptual. It is based on the experience gained while working in a large organization. Since the Four 'I' concept has been named by the author, there is no report currently having any quantitative data showing the usefulness of the concept.

[1] <sup>1</sup> - <http://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/the-keys-to-organizational-agility> only definition stated by Aaron De Smet is taken.

[2] – The figures used in the paper are taken from internet but all of them have been modified based on the context of the paper.