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Social skill sets for successful change management in transformation projects

Department: Project Management

Submitted by: Mario Illechko

Registration number: 1710387026

Assessor: Prof.in (FH) Mag.a (FH) Ina Pircher

Awarding authority: University of Applied Sciences of the BFI Wien GmbH
Wohlmutstraße 22
1020 Vienna

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List of abbreviations

CMChangemanagement

IPMA   International Project Management Association

OCMOrganizational change management

PMProject Management

PMBOK   Project Management Body of Knowledge

PMIProject   Management Institute

Abstract

At times when digitization and digital transformation are on everyone's lips and, above all, far-reaching changes to processes and, as a consequence, to the organization itself are necessary measures to remain competitive or, for example, to gain advantages over the competition, professional support for change at all levels relevant to a company is a decisive criterion for success.

Change Management should be the permanent companion of every project, because projects of any kind usually also mean a change, of course in different forms and with the corresponding priority, but nevertheless Change Management is not to be imagined without.

In further consequence, social skills provide the project manager with the necessary toolset to be successful in difficult project situations. The perception of a company and its business environment as a social construct, which is best met with social skills in the context of team dynamics, provides the starting point for the topic of change management.

The author dealt specifically with the fact that digital transformation projects in particular have a considerable complexity and mean a major change for a company, but above all for its employees. Even if this change management component is often not consciously perceived and therefore neglected, it is there.

The awareness that a change is underway and the creation of framework conditions, the learning and application of social skills and methods that simplify the handling of these skills is an essential success factor for projects of this kind.

The question how a change project should be set up in the above-mentioned context and which social skills, methods and toolkits a project manager needs to be equipped with in order to create a framework for successfully managing complex changes in companies is answered.

The omnipresence of digitization and transformation projects and the connection between change management in projects, which has been treated very little in the literature, and subsequently the combination or prerequisite of needs-oriented social

skills to increase the probability of success of complex projects confirms the scientific relevance of the topic.

This bachelor thesis confirms the link between change management and project management and defines a tool set of social skills that can serve as a tool for successful implementation. For this purpose, an exchange with experts took place in order to obtain the information and data necessary to answer the questions asked in interviews. According to the current state of research, the combination of change management and project management and needs-oriented social skills are still blind spots and a few experts are working on these topics and combinations.

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1   Introduction

In times when digitization, digitalization and digital transformation are on everyone's lips and, above all, far-reaching changes to processes and, as a consequence, to the organization itself are necessary measures to remain competitive or, for example, to gain advantages over the competition, professional support for change at all levels relevant to a company is a decisive criterion for success.

Change Management should be the permanent companion of every project, because projects of any kind usually also mean change, of course in the most diverse forms and with the corresponding priority, but change management is nevertheless indispensable.[1]

Social skills also provide the project manager with the necessary toolset to be successful in difficult project situations. The perception of a company and its environment as a social construct, which is best met with social skills in the context of team dynamics[2],[3] provides the starting point for the topic of change management.

The author will deal with the fact that digital transformation projects in particular are extremely complex and mean a major change for a company, but above all for its employees. Even if this change management component is often not consciously perceived and therefore neglected, it is there.

The awareness that a change is underway and the creation of framework conditions, the learning and application of social skills and methods that simplify the handling of these skills is an essential success factor for projects of this kind.

The question arises as to how a change project should be set up in this context and which social skills, methods and toolkits a project manager must have in order to create a framework for successfully managing complex changes in companies.

The omnipresence of digitisation and transformation projects and the link between change management in projects, which is very little discussed in the literature, and

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[1] See Gareis (2018) online.

[2] Cf. Tuckman (1965).

[3] Cf. Hendling (2019) online.

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subsequently the linking or prerequisite of needs-oriented social skills to increase the probability of success of complex projects, confirms the scientific relevance of the topic. This bachelor thesis should confirm the connection between change management and project management and define a toolset of social skills which can serve as a tool for successful implementation. This requires, among other things, an exchange with experts in order to obtain the information and data necessary to answer the questions asked in interviews. According to the current state of research, especially the combination of change management, project management and needs-oriented social skills are still blind spots, and a few experts are still working on these topics and combinations. This bridge is to be developed and built here.

1.1 Research questions

1.1.1 Main question

HF:

To what extent does change management favour the success of transformation projects?

1.1.2 Subquestions

UF1:

Which characteristics illustrate the need for change management?

UF2:

Which social skills form the basis for successful change managers?

1.2 Methodical procedure

Due to gaps in the question regarding the connection between change management and project management and, consequently, the interplay of needs-oriented social skills in current research and literature, as much input as possible on the above-mentioned questions should or must be gathered primarily through expert interviews. For this purpose, two experts will be interviewed in semi-structured interviews on several questions in about 30 minutes in order to obtain structured answers to the topics that are rarely dealt with in the literature and also to respond to the answers in a correspondingly precise manner and to obtain as much information as possible.

As experts Lorenz Gareis, Managing Director of Roland Gareis Consulting GmbH and Daniel Hendling of Hendling e.U. were chosen. Lorenz Gareis advises national and international companies from numerous industries and branches on the topics of project & change management. As co-author he published the book "PROJEKT.PROGRAMM.CHANGE". Daniel Hendling was the president of the PMI Austria Chapter for almost ten years and has worked on standards like the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBoK) or Change Management Standard of the Association of Change Management Professionals (ACMP).

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The interviews will be recorded with the consent of the respondents, in order to have the possibility to analyse the answers on the basis of a qualitative content analysis according to Philipp A. E. Mayring.

The author thus chooses an empirical work, based on the literature of Tuckman (Stages of small group development), Kreutzer (Digital Business Leadership), Lauer (Change Management. Basics and success factors) and Gareis (PROJECT.PROGRAM.CHANGE). This forms the basis and definitions and thus the basis for the expert interviews. They provide the content to answer the questions and provide a comparison to the existing literature.

1.3   Structure of the work

After the **introduction** to the topic including the presentation of the initial situation and the presentation of the research question or the methodological approach, **Chapter 2** continues with the basics and definitions of terms of the different disciplines. The focus of this chapter is primarily on transformation projects, change projects or the demarcation of the underlying disciplines and needs-oriented social skills.

Chapter 3 contains the expert interviews and explains the approach or provides the qualitative content analysis for further processing of the topic.

Chapter 4 is derived from this, in which the disciplines are linked together again after the original delimitation in Chapter 2, and subsequently promising skills set definitions and recommendations are made available.

Finally, **chapter 5 summarizes** the work and also brings in a personal summary of the author.

2 Basics

This chapter provides the basic definitions of terms based on various specialist literature in order to ensure a uniform basis for further discussion of the topic.

For this purpose, the terms project management and change management are defined in general terms before areas of application such as transformation projects or change projects are further specified. This is followed by the definition of needs-oriented social skills and the demarcation between project and change management.

2.1 Definition of terms

2.1.1 Project Management

Different perceptions of projects such as

- as tasks

- as temporary organizations

- as social systems

lead to different expectations of how projects are managed and thus to different project management approaches.

According to Gareis[4] a general clarification of the term "project" is necessary and the operationalization into different organizational contexts is necessary. To distinguish are programs, small projects and plans, so that a suitable organization can be selected for the implementation.

Contexts are e.g. strategies, structures and cultures of the project-oriented organization or the changes that arise from projects. Programmes and projects are carried out in contexts.

A project represents a temporary organization that is carrying out a relatively unique strategic process. The more unique the tasks and objectives are, the greater the risks involved. It is often almost impossible to make judgements based on experience. Projects are of short to medium duration and should therefore be implemented as quickly as possible. The PMBOK[5] describes the term "temporary" as follows

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[4] See Gareis/Gareis (2018) p. 3.

[5] See Project Management Institute (2013).

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> *„Temporary does not typically mean the duration of the project is short.*
> *It refers to the project's engagement and its longevity."*[6]

Gareis concretizes the term and categorizes the implementation period of several months to a year. The duration depends on the type of the project:

- Concept project   →   3 - 5 months
- Infrastructure or construction projects   →   > 12 months

Criterion	Small Project	Project	Program
Strategic importance	low	medium	medium to high
Duration	at least 2 months	at least 3 months	at least 12 months
Organizations involved	at least 3 organizations (inclusive external partners)	at least 5 organizations (inclusive external partners)	at least 7 organizations (inclusive external partners)
Personnel resources	at least 150 person-days	at least 250 person-days	at least 700 person-days
External costs	at least 0,05 Mio €	at least 0,5 Mio €	at least 2 Mio €

Figure 1: Project categories by duration[7]

Project chains or programmes help to avoid longer project durations.[8]

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[6] Project Management Institute (2013) p.2.

[7] Gareis/Gareis (2018) p. 9.

[8] See Gareis/Gareis (2018) p. 6.

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2.1.1.1 Transformation Project

According to Kreutzer, the digital transformation of the entire organization is defined as

> *"...a digital value chain as a supplement to the classic value chain in the company."*[9]

Further he describes:

> *"Digitalization has thus permeated the entire organization. There is also a holistic approach to customer management. Digital and analogue customer touchpoints are fully integrated. The digital transformation has taken place; any necessary business model innovation has been successfully established (see Schallmo 2014).".*[10]

In order to achieve this degree of penetration, Kreutzer points to the application of systematic change management, since ultimately, on the path of digital transformation, established visions, values, goals, strategies, responsibilities, budgets, procedures, reporting paths and structures are subjected to a fundamental change process.[11]

In order to give structure to the implementation of the wealth of unique and strategic processes, reference is made to the definition of project management, which by definition recommends the application of project management methods in the context of such a multitude of complex and risky changes. In this context, projects manage, structure and accompany the digital transformation project in the form of project chains or programs.[12]

2.1.2 Change Management

Since the subject area of change management in itself already covers a wide range of theories and definitions, a conceptual examination is inevitable.

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[9] Kreutzer/Neugebauer/Pattloch (2017) P. 214f.

[10] Kreutzer/Neugebauer/Pattloch (2017) p. 215.

[11] See Kreutzer/Neugebauer/Pattloch (2017) p. 215.

[12] See Gareis/Gareis (2018) p. 6.

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In the context of information systems, the term change management usually refers to the documentation and control of changes to the IT infrastructure and its components in order to guarantee ongoing operations and keep them as trouble-free as possible.[13] Thus, technical changes are in the foreground in this context. However, these are not the subject of this paper.

Change management is a collective term for all approaches to prepare and support individuals, teams and organizations in implementing organizational change. It includes methods that realign or redefine the use of resources, business processes, budget allocations or other modes of operation that significantly change, realign or redefine a company or organization. Organizational change management (OCM) considers the entire organization and change needs, while change management refers exclusively to how people and teams are affected by such organizational changes. It deals with many different disciplines, from behavioral and social sciences to information technology and business solutions.[14]

In order to create a conceptual delimitation, reference is made to the definitions of Vahs and Weiand as well as Stolzenberg and Heberle. Both interpretations include both social and economic aspects. The focus of the definition of Vahs and Weiand is on the design of the change process and, consequently, on the achievement and increase of efficiency and effectiveness through the target state. From the point of view of change management, the content objective is therefore of secondary importance.[15] The support of the change project and the acceptance of the future state by those affected are clearly in the foreground at Stolzenberg and Heberle.[16]

The Change Definition according to Gareis is as follows:

> *"A change in an organizational context is a continuous or discontinuous development of an organization in which one or more dimensions of the organization are affected. It is assumed that in a change the social*

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[13] See Gronau (2014) p. 186.

[14] See Murgasova (2017) p. 15.

[15] See Vahs/Weiand (2013) p. 7.

[16] See Stolzenberg/Heberle (2013), p. 6.

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> *structures and stakeholder relations of the organization are affected. It is*
> *therefore a "social" change."*[17]

The definition according to Gareis refers to the theories of Lewin and puts primarily social aspects in the foreground.

The rule of thumb is that change must always begin internally and is reflected in a process with several phases. First in the minds of managers and employees, then in the structures and processes. Since this is also a time-critical process, a corresponding systematic orientation and design of a change management process is necessary.[18]
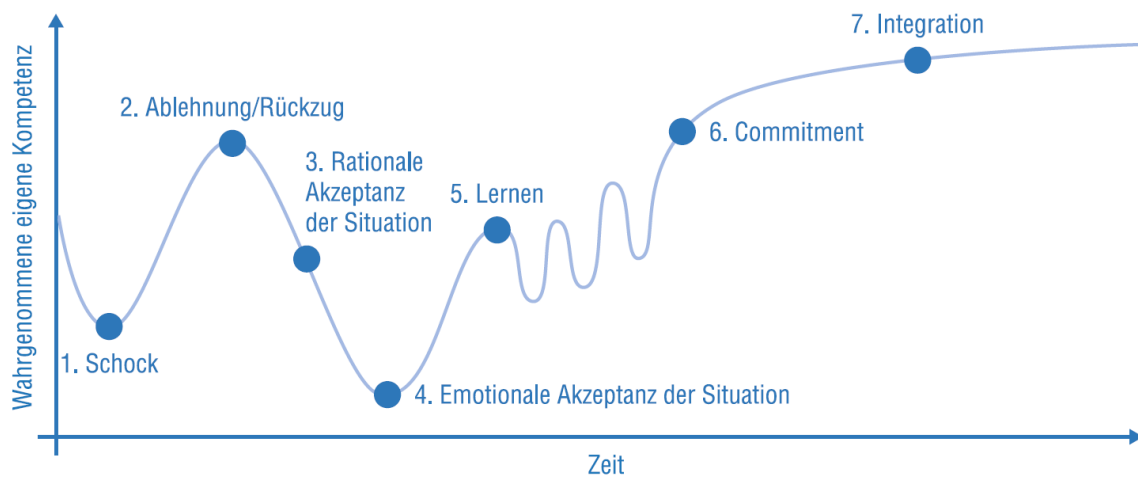
Figure 2: Classical course of a change management process[19]

2.1.2.1 Change Project

In a project management context, the term change management can be used as an alternative to change control processes where changes to the scope of a project are formally introduced and approved.[20] This form of change management will not be considered further in this paper. Rather, in the context of this paper and based on the

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[17] Gareis/Gareis (2018) p. 371.

[18] See Kreutzer/Neugebauer/Pattloch (2018), pp. 216f.

[19] Kreutzer/Neugebauer/Pattloch (2018) p. 217.

[20] See Gareis/Gareis (2018) p. 299.

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definition of the term change management for change projects, the focus is on accompanying the transition from an initial state to a target state. The design of the path from ACTUAL to TARGET is thus above the objective in terms of content in change projects. Changes are achieved through projects or through project chains and/or programs. The structural connection between changes and projects is shown in the architectures of change, i.e. in the structuring of the change process through projects.[21]

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[21] See Gareis/Gareis (2018) p. 369.

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2.1.3 Needs-oriented social skills

Needs-oriented social skills are based on Daniel Hendling's Spectrum of Needs model, which is a psychological-philosophical model. It is based on three sub-areas to which human needs are distributed:

- "I" area with the strongest focus on personal needs[22]

- "We" area of interpersonal relations22

- "System" area, which illuminates the patterns and structures of the entire system22

The distinctions and interactions of needs and feelings are the focus of attention and are the core for understanding the model. According to the assumption, every human being has an inherent complex of needs. This should be broken down into individual needs that are as granular and self-explanatory as possible, in order to be evaluated by the person himself according to perceived importance.

In different forms, all people have the same set of needs. According to the model, strongly pronounced needs are represented as buttons, which have a positive or negative effect when pressed. Thus, either a pleasant or an unpleasant feeling arises, depending on whether a need has been satisfied or insulted / neglected. Thoughts, perceptions and activities can both satisfy and offend needs. Identifying the button that is pressed or could be pressed to derive an appropriate action allows feelings to be influenced. In the case of a negative feeling this would mean changing the state that pushes the button. This can be a state in the outside world that is being taken seriously - something said or a thought.

With these thoughts one should still differentiate whether the thought refers to a present, perceived reality - or whether it is a thought that refers to the future.[23]

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[22] Cf. Hendling (2019) online.

[23] Cf. Hendling (2019) online.

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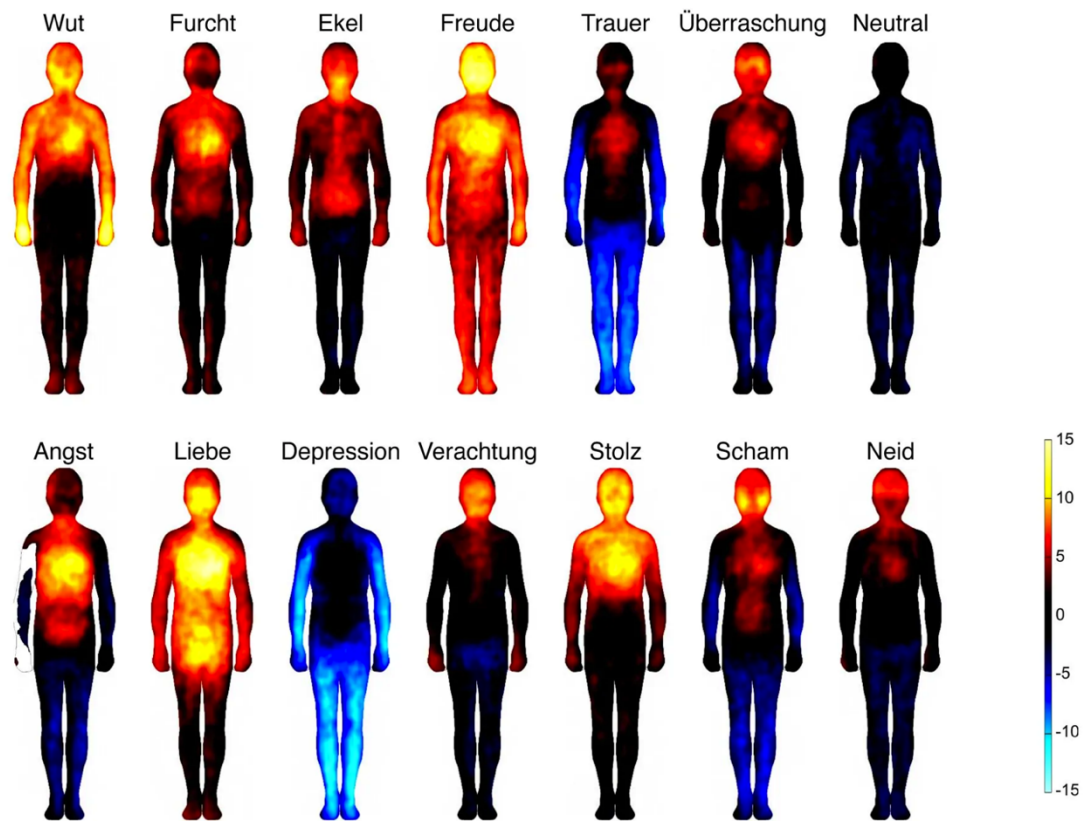
Figure 3: Emotions based on needs[24]

Feelings are triggered when a need is either satisfied or insulted. Emotions cannot be controlled, because they are connected to the needs in a mechanical effect.

The model thus creates links to related fields of knowledge for further consideration of interpersonal interaction and serves as a basis for transparency in the further orientation, leadership and development of teams. The model also provides the basis for defining social skills which can help a project manager to meet the needs of his project team members with a level of competence appropriate to the situation and to lead teams in complex social structures quickly, purposefully and efficiently.[25]

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[24] Cf. Hendling (2019) online.

[25] Cf. Hendling (2019) online.

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2.2 Distinction between project management and change management

In order to realize a successful implementation of change in organizations, change management is a business process that contributes to it. In practice, change management is usually reduced to change communication and is not explicitly implemented.[26]

In turn, project management and the underlying standards are widely used and can be found in all industries and in most companies. Statistics based on PM certifications:

PMP	IPMA/GPM	PRINCE2
890,000 certificates (2018)	250,000 certificates (2019)	950,000 certificates (2012)

Table 1: Dissemination of project management standards based on certifications[27]

A basic differentiation can be made on the basis of the roles or role descriptions. The following **Table 2**shows a comparison of the different roles in the different areas:

Change Management	Project Management	Programme Management
change owner	Project Owner	Program Owner
change manager	Project Manager	Programme Manager
change agent	Project Team Member	Program Team Member
Change Management Consultant	Project employee	Programme Staff
change team	Project Team	Program Team
	Project Sub-Team	

Table 2: Roles in change management[28]

Even if there is a counterpart for almost all roles, the interests and tasks differ fundamentally. As an example, the roles of project and change manager are mentioned. A project manager has the task of carrying out the tasks identified for the project in such a way that the required scope and quality objectives are achieved.

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[26] See Gareis/Gareis (2018) p. 369.

[27] Haufe Academy (2019) online.

[28] Gareis/Gareis (2018) p. 377.

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They play a key role in ensuring that what was envisaged in the business case is achieved. The Change Manager will work to integrate this solution with the rest of the organization and ensure that all stakeholders are ready to deal with the project result when it is delivered.

The following table highlights the differences in the roles:

change manager	Project Manager
Project communication outside the immediate project team	Defining the project scope
Planning and engagement activities of stakeholder management	Determination of the required resources and planning
Planning and implementation of change readiness	Planning of tasks, tracking and prioritization of work packages
Analysis of training needs and development of training solutions	Support in solving project problems
Development of skills where required	Management of project risks
Accepting change and sustaining change in the longer term	Project completion and handover at the end of the project

Table 3: Role description Change Manager and Project Manager[29]

In everyday project and/or change management, some of the tasks of a project manager listed in the **Table 3**are also performed by change managers and vice versa. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that a hard distinction, such as the definitions and role descriptions in the literature, is hardly ever or not at all applied in practice.[30]

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[29] See PMTips (2017) online.

[30] PMTips (2017) online.

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3 Expert interviews

To prepare the contents, a qualitative content analysis according to Philipp A. E. Mayring was chosen. Approach, structure and methodology are explained in detail in this chapter, as well as the interview results themselves. The complete transcripts can be found in the appendix. The summary of the two interview results including the link to the theory is given in chapter 4.

3.1 Approach, structure and methodology

3.1.1 Determination of the material

The selected interview partners are proven experts in the fields of project and change management. The interview passage has been selected that can be clearly assigned to the questions in the interview guide.[31]

3.1.2 Analysis of the development situation

Participation in the interviews was voluntary. The interviews were semi-structured interviews. The interviewer had a guideline with questions whose concrete formulation and order he could, however, vary and open questions, i.e. questions that could be answered freely by the interviewee. The interviews were conducted by the author himself and took place in the offices of the interviewees. [31]

3.1.3 Formal characteristics of the material

The interviews were recorded on tape and then transcribed into typewritten form on the computer. The following transcription instructions applied:[31]

▪ Transcribe completely and literally (leave incompleteness and repetitions)
▪ The content is in the foreground; >>äh<< and the like can be omitted; dialectal colorings are Germanized (zerscht = first; miaßn = must). Real dialect expressions however remain and are written by ear
▪ In case of ambiguity, make points (...), depending on the length of what was not understood, so that it can be added
▪ Use indent (-) for breaks, stagnation and similar. in the case of longer breaks, use several dashes; if the reason for the break is obvious, indicate it in brackets

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[31] See Mayring (2010) p. 56.

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▪ Other conspicuous features such as laughing, conspicuous clearing of throat or the like should be indicated in brackets
▪ All other non-verbal characteristics that are important for understanding the content, also in brackets, e.g: E: Mhm (consenting)
▪ When the interviewer asks or speaks a question, the "F" symbol (for question) is placed in the very margin, followed by a colon and two spaces, if more than one line is spoken, start again from the very margin
▪ If the interviewee, i.e. the expert, is speaking, please use the symbol "E" (for expert)

Table 4: Notes on interview transcription[32]

3.1.4 Interview guide

i. Basic question whether names and data may be published or must be made anonymous

ii. Introductory topic explanation and short description of the research question

iii. Questions:

    1. What is the relationship between projects and change?

        a. For which project types can patterns of increased change management needs be identified?

        b. What patterns do these project types have in common?

    2. Which project types are there in which change management is not necessary?

        a. What do these project types have in common to get along without change management?

    3. In your experience, which social skills contribute most to the success of the project?

        a. What basic conditions must be in place to successfully apply social skills?

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[32] See Mayring (2010) p. 57.

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      b.   Which methods or ceremonies support / promote the successful application of social skills?

    4. Which social skills contribute most to successful change management?

        a. What basic conditions must be in place to successfully apply social skills?

        b. Which methods or ceremonies support / promote the successful application of social skills?

3.1.5 Applied qualitative techniques

Due to the nature of the material, the author, within the framework of the qualitative content analysis according to Philipp A. E. Mayring, the author has decided on a summary with inductive category formation and content structuring. After several iterations of reduction, the representative statements of the source material can be found in the following two chapters.

3.2 Expert interview Daniel Hendling

The connection between projects and change is divided into two subject areas. Either the project causes the Change or a Change is implemented in project form. Projects whose target state represents a significant change in the organization need special attention and change support. The task of change management is therefore an additional task in the project. A certain degree of change management is generally indispensable in projects. If a change is implemented in project form, the project structure and methodology serve the higher goal of the change.

Change management is very people-oriented. People are at the centre of change, no matter in which form the change is implemented. It can be seen that the change is usually initiated from outside and is undesirable and causes resistance among the people concerned. The acceptance of the change takes time and therefore runs in waves or phases. Due to its complexity, the change cannot be completely controlled and measures and time are necessary to achieve and maintain the target state. The change, for example of an organisation (reorganisation project), also requires a change of the persons concerned and there is a risk that resistance will remain even after the target state has been reached.

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Based on this insight, the following project types can be identified, which have an increased need for change management:

- Organisational projects
    - o Organisational developments
    - o Reorganisations
    - o Insourcing / Outsourcing
    - o Centralisation / Decentralisation
    - o Process optimization / process automation / process introduction
- IT-related projects
    - o Self Service Portal
    - o Call Center Automation

On the other hand, there are also a few project types that have no or very little need for change management, as their impact on the people in the organization is very small:

- Product development
- Innovation projects in the context of product development
- Innovation Labs and Design Thinking projects
- Projects without preconditions, which experience a change
- Projects with small project teams, where all participants have decided to change

Which social skills contribute to successful project management? In summary, the following five points are the most relevant skill sets:

- Leadership Competence
    - o be able to apply different management styles as required
    - o Actively building and advancing trust
- High degree of self-reflection

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- o Understand interactions and understand yourself in the context of the project team
- Conflict Management Competence
  - o Empathy and empathy in difficult and pre-loaded situations as well as mediation skills
- Presentation Skills
  - o Confident appearance, persuasiveness, negotiation and moderation skills
- Communication Competence
  - o Flexibility to adapt to a person's culture and habits, to encourage dialogue and exchange for fair communication at eye level and visual support for communication to promote a common understanding

This requires a framework that supports the application of the defined social skills. A common basis of trust, a common project management culture and methodology as well as a common commitment, also with the project sponsor/project client, were mentioned as the most relevant ones. In addition, ceremonies such as informal meetings, dailies, coffee parties and jour fixe support the application positively. The conscious questioning of "How are you?" also promotes a positive exchange between all the people involved and provides important individual information on a social level with a high level of significance.

In contrast, a high degree of quantification of sensitivities is associated with a strongly negative effect. Team thermometers and the visualisation by means of smileys and dots can be perceived as negative.

The concluding question of which social skills contribute most to successful change management can be answered with the statement "the same skillset can be used as for project management". The only difference is that the focus is more on solving resistance and, in the context of conflict resolution competence, the increased use of needs-oriented social skills and empathy. A lower focus is on leadership competence, since direct team leadership in change management rarely takes place. In addition, a

common awareness of change must be created and therefore, in contrast to project management, a prioritization of quality before time results.

3.3 Expert Interview Lorenz Gareis

The connection between projects and change is divided into two subject areas. Minor Changes of the first order and Major Changes of the second order.

Minor changes can be implemented in a project and change management tasks are additional work packages in the project. Accordingly, the project manager assumes the tasks of a change manager.

Major changes require dedicated change management and can no longer be implemented in just one project. Project chains and program structures are recommended here. A superordinate change management makes strategic decisions and controls the implementation projects. This also ensures a clear separation of roles and tasks between project and change management. In addition, the management approach to be chosen depends on the type of change. Agile transformations require an implementation using agile approaches in order to be successful in the long term.

On the basis of this differentiation of the scope and complexity of change, patterns and subsequently the following project types can be identified:

- Samples
    - When personnel are directly influenced and need to be trained/enabled, and the target state is significantly different from the initial state
    - If the change needs acceptance in order to be sustainable and if the change in the project creates an obstacle between the involved project team and the employees in the line
- Project types
    - Implementation projects
        - Product development and introduction
        - Marketing projects
        - IT projects of any kind
    - Changes to the process organisation

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- Reorganisation projects
  - New roles are created
  - Old rolls are no longer needed
- Process and workflow optimization projects

Only a few projects manage without change management. Conception projects without further implementation, events, event projects and simple IT hardware projects such as the nationwide computer exchange of workstations are some of them, the result of which has little or no influence on an organization and subsequently on the people in a company.

The social skills necessary for successful project management are categorized in moderation skills, conflict management skills, leadership skills, self-reflection and flexibility or creativity in terms of creating and being able to accept new forms of work. All these competences take into account the ability to communicate, lead, moderate and reflect flexibly and situationally.

The necessary framework conditions that support the application of social skills are based very much on the values of the underlying organisation and the acting persons. Mindset and management approach must be compatible and systemic thinking and working methods must be coherent. The competence, the values and the role, for example of the project manager, must harmonize meaningfully for the purpose of the application and in turn fit the values of the client. In addition, there must be a willingness and openness to change and the client must support considered and courageous decisions.

The application of social skills itself can already be seen as a method and the form of work must be appropriate to the purpose. Important methods are self-reflection and reflection within the team and, subsequently, approaches of systemic management - forming hypotheses, intervening and reflecting. Regular observation and questioning of situations improves the communication and work forms.

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The difference between the social skills that provide the best possible support in project management and those in change management is merely the focus. In change management, conflict management skills and communication skills are in the foreground due to the broader orientation of a change. Especially creativity in reaching the larger and more diversified target group or a mix of methods and storytelling skills, how and in which nuances the change is communicated, are advantageous.

4 Linking the topics

In this chapter, the results of the expert interviews are compared and linked to the literature. Current literature is used to address the topic and the second reduction of the content analysis of the expert interviews. Subsequently, a skills set is defined on this basis, which can serve as a reference point for successful change management.

4.1 Change management and projects

Changes are achieved through projects or through project chains and/or programmes. In the change architectures, i.e. in the structuring of the change process through projects, the structural connection between projects and changes becomes apparent. Sub-processes such as "Start Change", "Coordinate Change", "Control Change", "Communicate Change" and "Complete Change" are comparable to the processes of the project management phase of classical project methodology. In contrast to projects, the focus of change management is not on fulfilling substantive tasks, but on managing a change. Although there are similar roles and responsibilities in change management as in project management, the tasks of the change manager and the project manager, for example, are fundamentally different - see Chapter 2.

To enable successful change, the change management process must be appropriately designed and its relationship with project management must be managed. Project management competencies available in organizations can be used for change implementation.[33]

This view of the literature is confirmed by both experts, and in practice it has been shown that from a change complexity of a Major Change onwards, a clear separation of change management from project and program management and the respective roles is absolutely necessary. The procedure is also described in waves or phases and the time required for a change to be sustainable is also described. This is reflected in the change architectures described below.

4.1.1 Examples of change architectures:

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[33] See Gareis/Gareis (2018) p. 369.

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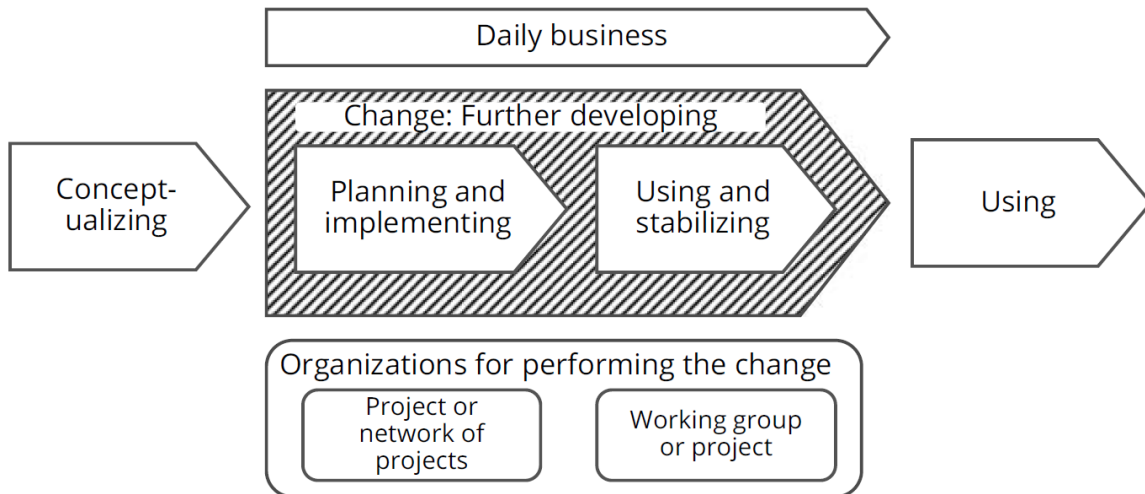
Figure4: Change architecture "Further developing[34]

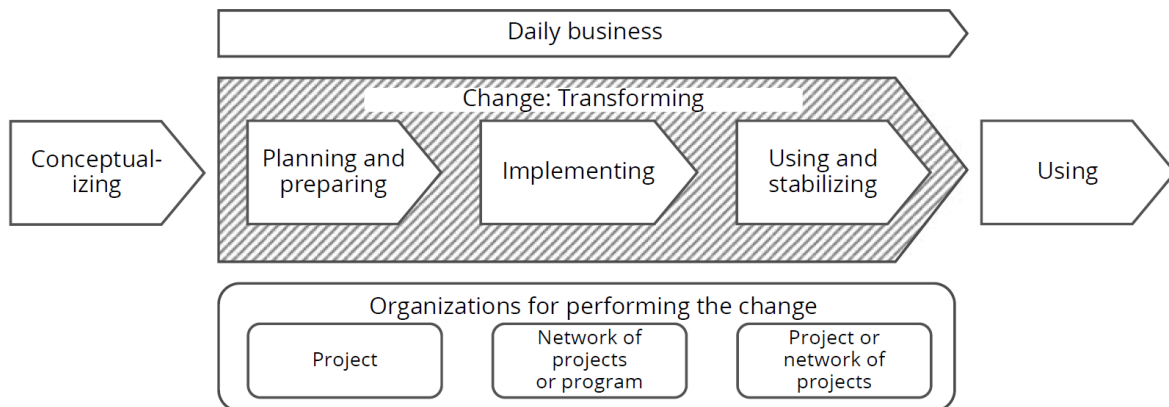**Figure 5:** Change architecture "Transforming"[34]

These architectures essentially address the findings of Lewin's field theory, whose performance curve in processes of excessive change describes the effect of resistance in the transformation process of an organization.

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[34] Gareis/Gareis (2018) p. 374.

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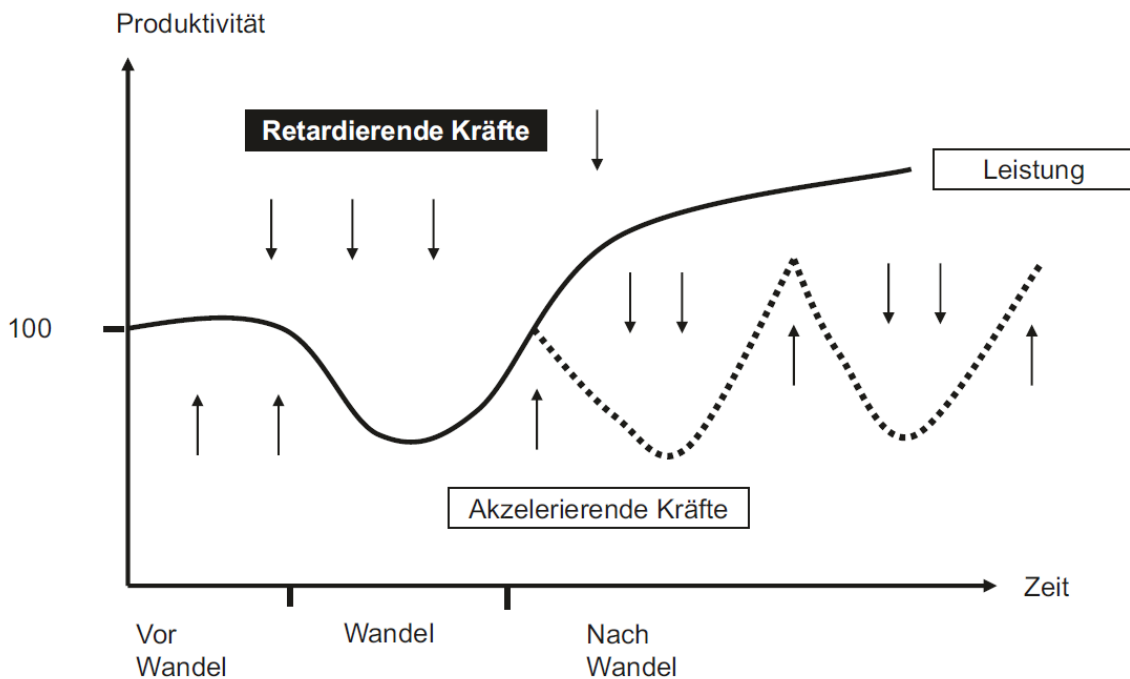
Figure 6: Typical performance curve in processes of excessive change[35]

"Changes by projects"[36]

This strategy requires an analysis of both the general and change type-specific relationships between change management and project management. From the expert interviews it is clear that, depending on the type of change, the appropriate management approach should also be chosen. In order to implement the change in a credible and sustainable manner, agile methods are therefore recommended for implementing an agile transformation of an organization, for example. This must be taken into account in the respective change architecture.[37]

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[35] Lauer (2019) p. 69.

[36] Gareis/Gareis (2018) p. 393.

[37] See Gareis/Gareis (2018) p. 393.

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4.1.2 General relationships between change management and project management

The following general relationships exist between change and project management:[38]

- Project management usually takes place in the context of changes. For this reason, change management defines goals, rules and standards that must be taken into account when managing change implementation projects.

- Project communication is an integral part of change communication. Project communication must be coordinated with change communication.

- The change stakeholders must be distinguished from the project stakeholders. On the one hand, there are stakeholders who only have project-related expectations. On the other hand, project stakeholders can also be change stakeholders. In this case, they have different expectations of the project and the Change.

- Change projects are often supported by external partners. A common understanding of change and project management of the contractor and the customer organization creates a win-win situation.

- Quick wins can be achieved in projects with changes. These quick wins must be planned jointly by the project team and the change team.

- The following differences between project and change managers can be identified:
  - Project managers are responsible for the project results and exercise integrative functions in projects.
  - Change managers are responsible for the change results and the integration of the changes.

- The role of the project manager differs from the role of the change manager also in the short-term orientation (for a project) compared to the medium-term orientation (for a change). In order to make the cooperation more efficient, it is necessary to ensure an appropriate understanding of the roles of the change managers and the project managers.

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[38] See Gareis/Gareis (2018) p. 394.

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Both experts agree that there is an absolute connection between change management and project management. Even if the approach is different, almost all statements from the respective perspective are reflected in the answers of the other expert and are largely consistent with the literature.
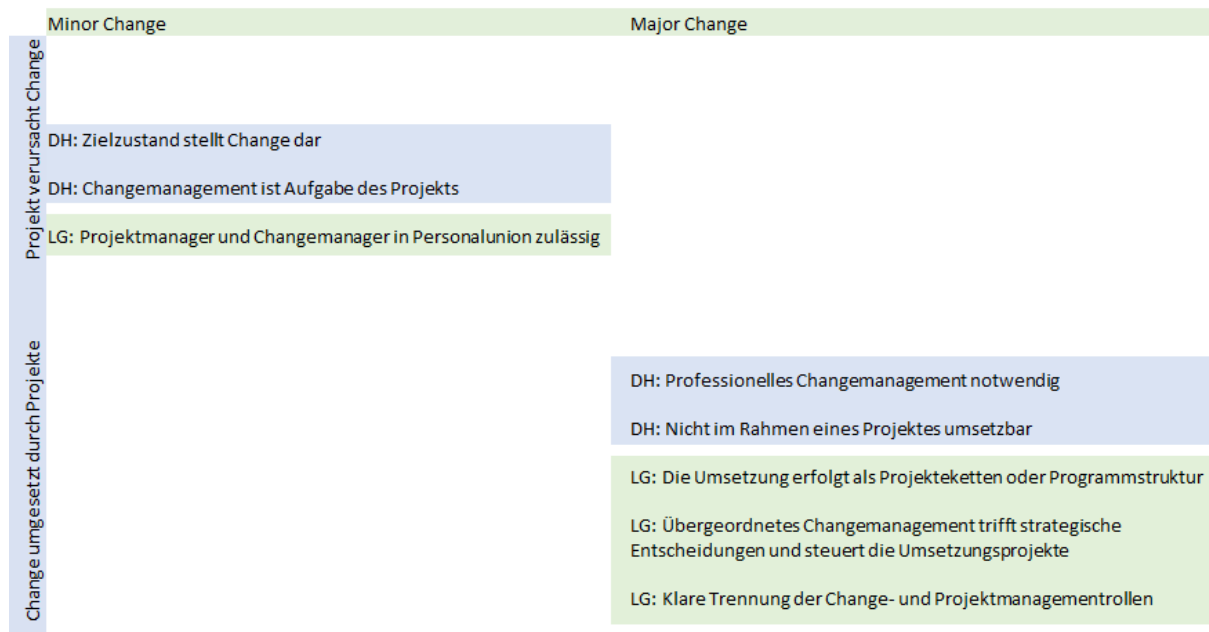

Figure 7: Reduced comparison of the answers to the first question

Figure 7 shows that although there are different perspectives on the same question, the statements do not contradict each other in any way, but rather complement each other. The perspectives and statements of Daniel Hendling are blue and of Lorenz Gareis green. It can be said that the consideration as Minor Change can be compared with the view "Project causes Change". The same applies to Major Change and "Change implemented by projects". Only in the necessary change management scope, the statements from the expert interview provide a better understanding. As already shown in the **Figure 5**, the most important distinguishing feature for the connection between project management and change management is the size or complexity of the change itself. For major changes, a superordinate and strategically oriented change management is indispensable. The implementation is primarily carried out via project chains and program structures and the projects are controlled by strategic decisions and in coordination, including the goals, rules and standards

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listed in the literature. However, in the case of minor changes this is only true to a very limited extent. There is no overarching change management, but rather the monitoring and management of change is seen as a subtask in the project or as part of the project manager's tasks. In addition, no central target, standard and communication specifications are made by a superordinate change-related instance.

4.2 Promising skillset of social skills

There are many factors that influence the success of change projects. One of the most essential is communication, as it is interwoven with all other success factors.

> *"Change management is a management task and leadership in today's working world consists largely of communication."[39]*

Communication and its task by means of gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice, etc., and also emotions to transport information, leads to motivation or demotivation. Change can only be triggered if the conflict is not shied away from and at the same time there is enough acceptance between the conflicting parties to make constructive cooperation possible. Thus, the management of a company needs at least one person who is willing and able to initiate change despite the expected resistance. In addition, a corporate culture is needed that allows change and does not encourage a split into two parties. Ideally, it functions as a kind of breeding ground for change.[40]

4.2.1 Leadership Competence

In the late 1970s, J. M. Burns[41] divided politicians into two categories:

- Our actions are primarily focused on the efficient management of existing processes
- The action is primarily focused on change in the sense of improving existing conditions

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[39] Lauer (2019) p. 75.

[40] See Lauer (2019) p. 75.

[41] See Burns (1978).

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Since the second category transforms the status quo, the term "transformational" was chosen, whereas for the first category, matching the description, transactional was chosen. This distinction was later applied to the behaviour of managers, from which the following definitions are derived:

Transaktionale Führung	Transformatorische
Sorge für Ordnung und Beständigkeit im komplexen Großunternehmen!	**Führung im eigentlichen Sinne, mit dem Gedanken des Wandels verbunden!**
Führungsstil: analytisch, sach-orientiert, planend, kontrolierend **Ergebnis:** = Dinge richtig tun (Effizienz)	**Führungsstil:** kommunikativ, motivierend, inspirierend, Sinn vermittelnd **Ergebnis:** = die richtigen Dinge tun (Effektivität)

Figure 8: Transactional and transformational management[42]

Leadership competence and the optimal mix of several leadership styles can thus be divided into the two blocks of transactional leadership and transformational leadership mentioned above, which differ fundamentally in their focus.[43]

Accordingly, transactional management ensures order and efficiency, which is particularly necessary in larger companies. Therefore, classical and functional management techniques such as goal setting, planning, decision making and control are more likely to be applied.

In contrast to this, effectiveness is the main focus in transformational management. Therefore, motivation, inspiration and communication as management techniques are in the foreground. The transformational leader sees himself much more as an initiator and driver of change than as the helmsman of it.

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[42] Lauer (2019) p. 90ff.

[43] See Lauer (2019) p. 89.

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In times of crisis, transformational leadership is needed to open up new growth opportunities or to introduce new technologies. Nevertheless, even in times of crisis, a certain amount of transactional leadership is needed, as can be seen from examples such as eBay and Google. Both companies installed classic transactional leadership after a very fast growing, transformational phase in order to internally stabilize the fast growing companies.[44]

Both experts describe a similar view of leadership from two perspectives. On the one hand, flexibility in leadership styles in order to be able to apply different leadership patterns depending on the situation; on the other hand, directive leadership behavior in change management is clearly considered counterproductive, which also allows the conclusion to be drawn that the best possible mix of leadership styles is required.

Effective leadership styles in change management as mentioned by the experts:

- Laissez-faire
    - Independent and therefore motivating
    - Increasing creativity
- Coaching accompanying[45]
    - Development of personal strengths of the employees in the team
    - "Try it yourself" mentality
- Servant Leader[46]
    - Focus on trust and the needs of the employees in the team
    - Promotes commitment and has a motivating effect
    - Decision-making powers are geilt with the team and promote innovation

The three mentioned can be assigned to the transformational leadership and the directive leadership is reflected in the transactional approach.

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[44] Cf. Lauer (2019) pp. 89ff.

[45] Cf. Besserer (2018) online.

[46] Cf. Besserer (2018) online.

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Interestingly, this integration contradicts the experts' statement that leadership competence in change management is of secondary importance. Quite the contrary. In the context of the optimal mix of leadership styles, leadership is considered very important in the implementation of a change.

The experts' view is based on the view of an external change manager who supports the change of an organisation within the framework of a consultation. It[47] can be assumed that in this constellation both management profiles are actually present and that the profile of transactional leadership is understood as the skillset of the external change manager.

4.2.2 Communication competence:

As the most important personality trait, communication can be described as a kind of catalyst, since without it change can neither be initiated nor implemented.[48]

Tasks to be performed:

- Creation of informational transparency
    - o Communication of the reasons for the change
    - o Mention of visions and goals
    - o Creation of orientation
- Detection and mitigation of resistance
    - o Resistance ultimately arises from failed communication processes
    - o Supports conflict management
- Reinforcement of the process in terms of positive feedback
    - o Feedback to all with first success messages (Quick Wins)
    - o Change- / Project Marketing
- Promoting social inclusion

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[47] See Lauer (2019) p. 217.

[48] See Lauer (2019) p. 125.

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- o Supporting the meeting and cooperation of people who have been strangers to each other up to now

Personal communication plays a particularly important role in change management, as it is less ambiguous and more motivating. As much transparency as possible regarding the goals and background of the intended change should be communicated to all those affected as quickly and simultaneously as possible in a language that is understandable to the target group. Especially to overcome resistance during the course of the change, the mastery of specific communication techniques is of great importance.

The operation of a variety of formats is also described by the experts, who attach great importance to this competence as described in the literature. Special emphasis is placed on the necessary flexibility to adapt communication to the culture and habits of the target groups. Furthermore, dialogue and exchange at eye level and visual support of communication to promote understanding and prevent misunderstandings. A further point is described by creativity in the design of workshop formats, meetings and communication structures, thus practically rounding off the explanations in the literature.

4.2.3 Conflict Management

Communicative overcoming of resistances[49]

Typical behaviour patterns are derived from the persons concerned and their perception.

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[49] See Lauer (2019) p. 142.

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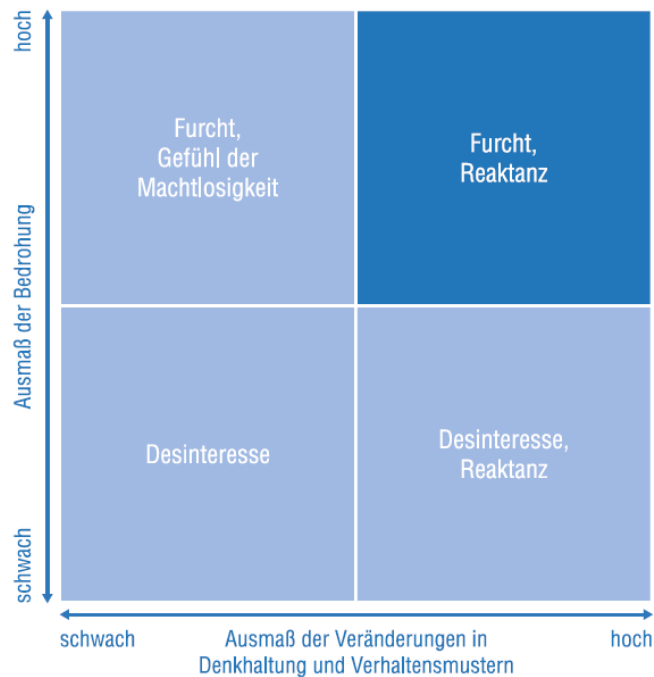
Figure9: Affected area matrix: typology of perceived changes[50]

The reactions to the change described in the **Figure9** represent the basis of conflicts and resistance which the Change Manager encounters in the course of the Change.

> *„If you want to repair a bicycle or an automobile, you first have to understand how it works."[51]*

An uncontrolled conflict usually has four clearly distinguishable phases:

- Discussion
- Superimposed events
- Escalation
- posture hardening

When a longer-term conflict process develops, the events it causes can overlay the original issue to such an extent that in the end no one can remember that the original

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[50] Kreutzer/Neugebauer/Pattloch (2018) p. 218.

[51] Doppler/Lauterburg (2001) p. 280.

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conflict itself ever existed. If one side begins to believe that the other side does not take it seriously or that its integrity is being violated or abused, it reacts with anger and outrage. Subsequently, it goes on to counter-attack and vice versa. The conflict enters the hot phase - the so-called symmetrical escalation. It is no longer the original issue that is in the foreground, but the current behaviour of each side. No conflict can remain in the hot phase for long. Sooner or later there will be a cooling off phase. Either because one side has won, or because the balance of power has created a stalemate. In the latter case, the conflict has become chronic, which can also be described as a "cold war".[52]

What needs to be done in concrete terms? The following points provide prerequisites for resolving conflicts:

- Setting up direct communication
- Monitoring of the dialogue
- Revealing emotions
- Dealing with the Past
- Negotiating a mutually acceptable solution[53]

Both experts confirm the importance of conflict management, which has been mentioned several times in theory. The high level of conflict potential that change brings with it does not allow this topic to be ignored. In order to be successful as a change manager, one must be aware of this and meet the emerging resistance with moderation and mediation skills, empathy and empathy and emotional intelligence. The Spectrum of Needs model[54] can provide practical support here in identifying and developing approaches to conflict and resistance management.

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[52] See Doppler/Lauterburg (2001) p. 280f.

[53] Cf. Doppler/Lauterburg (2001) p. 282f.

[54] Cf. Hendling (2019) online.

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4.2.4 Moderation skills

In general, facilitation can be understood as the steering of self-organized and solution-oriented teamwork. The efficient and effective control of the process to find a common solution to the problem is the task of the moderator. Therefore he can be seen as a content-neutral specialist for methodology, visualization and presentation as well as conflict management. The following characteristics define professional moderation behaviour:[55]

- contact-making
    - Eye contact and attentive listening
    - Strengthen the contribution made with praise
- Establishing compensation
    - Neutral position and not taking sides
    - Balancing the quantity of the word contributions
        - Include silence
        - Cautious braking of frequent speakers
- Providing an overview
    - Structured methods for documentation and presentation of goals, results, instructions
- Mastering critical situations
    - De-escalating techniques and not launching a counter-attack
    - Analyse aggressive attitude and find a constructive solution

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[55] See Lauer (2019) p. 160f.

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6 Phasen des Moderationszyklus

- Feedbackrunde
- Stimmungsbarometer
- Erwartungscheck

6. Abschließen

1. Einsteigen

- Ziele des Workshops
- Vorstellungsrunde
- Erwartungsabfrage

- Maßnahmenplan

5. Planen

2. Sammeln

- Kartenabfrage
- Punktabfrage

- Fischgrätdiagramm
- Mind-Map

4. Bearbeiten

3. Auswählen

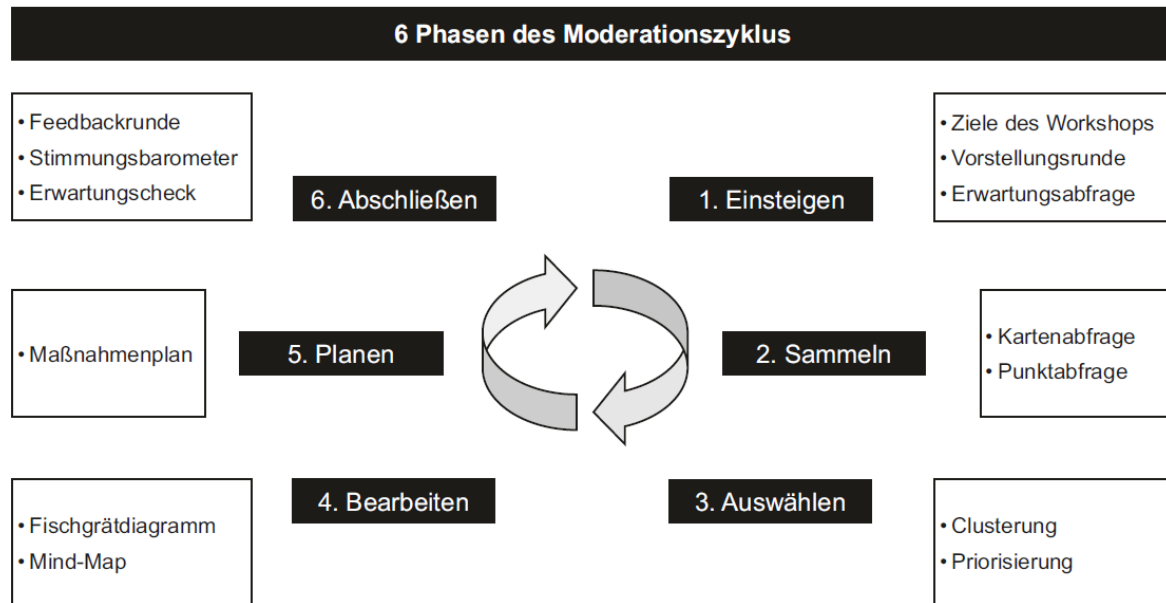- Clusterung
- Priorisierung

Figure 10: The six phases of a moderation cycle[56]

The phases shown in the **Figure 10**represent the basic form of a moderation cycle. By initially creating orientation and an informal working atmosphere, all problem points can be defined, the most important ones filtered out and then worked on. This can be done, for example, with an Ishikawa diagram or a mind-map. The fifth step is now the planning of the developed measures in order to finally complete the cycle after a review of expectations and feedback. The goal should be to leave the workshop with a positive and motivated atmosphere of departure.[57]

Both experts considered moderation, presentation and persuasion skills to be necessary. Supplemented by negotiating skills, this social skills set rounds off the abilities of a change manager also on a methodical level.

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[56] Lauer (2019) p. 161.

[57] See Lauer (2019) p. 160ff.

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4.2.5 Emotional intelligence

The second important personality trait for change managers is emotional intelligence. In the search for characteristics of successful managers, five factors were found in a study by Daniel Goleman,[58] which he summarizes as the term emotional intelligence.[59]

- Self-reflection
    - Know your own moods, feelings and drives and their interaction with others
    - Necessary as a critical attitude towards one's own perception in a social system
- Self-monitoring
    - Mastering sudden impulses or moods
    - Serves as a basis for trustworthiness
    - Supports de-escalation of potential conflicts
- Motivation
    - Dedication to work for reasons beyond money
    - Role model function
- Empathy
    - Ability to empathise with the feelings of others
    - Extremely important for the role of the coach
- Social competence
    - The ability to build relationships and networks
    - Creates broad acceptance to initiate change
    - The undirected communication in the networks transports valuable information about risks and opportunities

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[58] See Henry (2001) p. 128.

[59] See Lauer (2019) p. 108.

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In contrast to the literature, both experts have used the term self-reflection as an umbrella term for emotional intelligence. In terms of content, however, it is absolutely congruent with the factors described according to Goleman.

Understanding the interdependencies, understanding oneself in the context of the project team or the change, knowing one's own behaviour patterns and needs in order to develop flexibility in thinking and mindset, in order to be able to accept new, different forms of work depending on the situation, support the change manager in implementing the changes.

4.2.6 Framework conditions for application

In order to successfully apply social skills in the context of change management, framework conditions within the system are required which support or even strengthen the effects and impact. In general, the experts have defined the following framework conditions:

- A value system of the organization appropriate for the purpose
    - Willingness and openness to change
    - Solid basis of trust and joint commitment to the cause
    - Project / change client takes his responsibility and supports the team or the project
    - Freedom of action, autonomy and scope of the project manager as a manager
    - Client, who supports well-considered and courageous decisions
    - Open communication and transparency
- Common project management culture and methodology
    - Standards PMI, IPMA, etc.
- Systemic thinking and working methods are based on the values of the organisation

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In order to define the framework conditions, an awareness of the factors influencing a change process is necessary.[60]

Figure 11: Iceberg model - factors influencing the change process[61]

The influencing factors on the invisible psychological level of the change process described in the **Figure 11**starting point for the framework conditions for the successful application of social skills. Cultural aspects, value systems and ways of thinking and working are derived from them and provide the basis for defining the necessary framework.[62]

Awareness of needs and emotions is also the starting point of the Spec/Neugebauer/Pattloch trum of Needs model explained in chapter 2.[63]

4.3   Application area digital transformation

Due to their scope and complexity, transformation projects fall by definition into the category of Major Changes or Second Order Changes, as described in Chapter 2[64]. The change that an organization undergoes in order to sustainably survive in the target

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[60] See Kreutzer/Neugebauer/Pattloch (2018) pp. 219f.

[61] Kreutzer/Neugebauer/Pattloch (2018) p. 219.

[62] See Kreutzer/Neugebauer/Pattloch (2018) pp. 219f.

[63] Cf. Hendling (2019) online.

[64] Cf. Gareis/Gareis (2018) p. 371f.

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state after a transformation is associated with a high level of effort and commitment from all those involved.
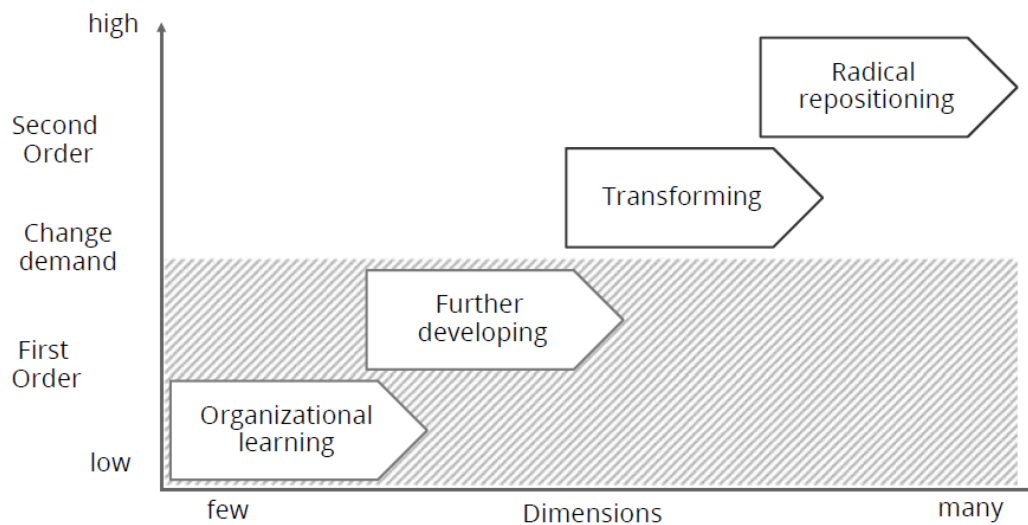

Figure 12: Change types of permanent organizations[65]

Indications of future threats but also potential opportunities lead to a medium to high need for change. The development of a new business model, the merger with or the takeover of another organization are examples of where the need for change arises. Strategic and cultural reorientation are side effects and allow the assumption that almost all dimensions of an organization are affected by the change. Transformation is the appropriate type of change. Project chains or program structures, as described in chapter 4.1, are necessary to realize or implement this type of change.[66]

Both experts consider the installation of necessary framework conditions and the application of social skills specifically geared to change management to positively influence the course of a second-order change as absolutely necessary. They promote a successful implementation or change of the organization.

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[65] Gareis/Gareis (2018) p. 372.

[66] See Gareis/Gareis (2018) p. 372.

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5   Conclusio

The connection between project and change or, subsequently, between project management and change management can be clearly confirmed. Almost every project brings about a change, which has to be managed. Only in a few exceptions, such as event projects or conception projects where no implementation takes place, change management can be neglected.

Furthermore, the question must be asked, was it the project or the change first? To answer this question, a conclusion can be drawn about the scope and complexity of the change. As confirmed by both experts and the literature, in the case of a second-order change, or major change, the change must first be planned and change management set up before implementation can begin, e.g. by means of project chains or program structures. Here the choice of the management approach is essential, as this has a direct influence on the sustainable success of a change. Digital transformations represent this massive change of a company and are therefore to be assigned to the further approach for major changes. Strategic decisions, goals, standards and communication structure are centrally defined for the projects via change management. The goal fulfillment of each project contributes like a jigsaw puzzle to the realization of the change and thus shapes the path of the employees of an organization. Since a change or change project is primarily about the change of the affected employees, a skill set for change and project managers is necessary, which helps them in their daily work in dealing with conflict situations and resistance. A further distinction between major and minor change also plays a role here. Since a Minor Change is usually implemented with only one project, the project manager can also take over the tasks of the Change Manager in a reduced form. It is therefore important that both role profiles also have the same skill set of social skills. It can therefore be said quite clearly that there is no distinction here, although in the expert interviews leadership skills were not classified as essential for change managers. The literature contradicts this statement and presents the transformational leader as a set of leadership styles that strongly support the change manager in fulfilling his or her role. The literature contradicts this statement and presents the transformational leader as a set of leadership styles that strongly supports the change manager in fulfilling his or her role. This is backed up by experience from the recent past, where it has been

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shown that a leadership style with a spirit of innovation and flexibility, or almost visionary, is very beneficial in times of change, but also requires the stability of transactional leadership at the right time. In other words, a balance must be found to suit the respective situation.

This results in the following five competence areas for social skills:

- Leadership Competence

- Communication Competence

- Conflict Management Competence

- Moderation skills

- Emotional intelligence

For support in the application of social skills, especially in terms of conflict management or the initial planning of change, the [Spectrum of Needs model](#)[67] by Daniel Hendling can be mentioned. It supports the identification of needs and visualises the need for action or enables the development of targeted measures for mitigation of resistance.

The initial main research question, to what extent change management favors the success of transformation projects, is thus answered very clearly with "without change management, a transformation project cannot be successfully implemented".

Sub-question 1, which characteristics illustrate the need for change management, is answered with "people-centered", "big change" and "high degree of complexity" and can be found in the demarcation between minor and major change.

Question 2, which social skills form the basis for successful project managers, has already been examined in detail.

In summary, it can be said that in a digital transformation of an organization, the underlying change architecture and the chosen management approach are of utmost

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[67] Cf. Hendling (2019) online.

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importance. The selection of the profiles that fill the defined roles of the change manager and the project managers can differ from the respective goal and content of the project, but must be very carefully chosen and appropriate for the purpose. Furthermore, it is necessary to establish a culture of change and openness so that new management approaches and the application of the social skills necessary for interaction with the people concerned can have an impact.

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