Managing Change by Innovative Engagement of Disablers of Change – Lessons from the roll out of e-governance project (Passport Seva Project-PSP) in Tiruchirappalli Regional Passport Office

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ABSTRACT Information & Communication technology (ICT) has pervaded every walk of life bringing in effectiveness, ease of use and anytime anywhere availability. Governance is not an exception, as the application of ICT enhances the vital element of transparency. This paper gives an account of how a manually worked, crowded Passport office was transformed into a streamlined, e-Governance- Passport Seva in the sensitive regions of Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu. The case study provides details of the roll out of e-governance project on issue of passport, the resistances faced from internal and external stakeholders. It describes in detail how the external resistances were addressed – both directly and indirectly (innovatively) - to make the program successful. Change Management models are cited as reference and to substantiate the process followed. The lessons learnt is also given for adaptation for future roll out of such programs.

1. Introduction

In the ever changing global economy, India has been consistently claiming its rightful place by way of its economic and intellectual contribution and performance. As the world became flatter, India had become a formidable investment destination. In order to be an attractive investment destination, India needed to show an agile and transparent governance. Thus many government services have been e-governance enabled – making the services thru the application of information & communication technologies (ICT).

Such e-Governance programs were covered under the National E-Governance Plan (NeGP) and several Mission Mode Projects were created. One such project is the focus of the current study. It is called as Passport Seva Project (PSP). This project was launched by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in 2008 and is operated by Tata Consultancy Services under the Public Private Partnership (PPP) model.

In June 2011, the first Passport Seva Kendra was rolled out in Passport Office, Tiruchirappalli, TamilNadu.

2. About the case study.

This case study is about the following:

A. Status of Passport office in Tiruchirappalli before implementation of the e-Governance project and the need for transformation.
B. Explicit and implicit resistance faced from various interest groups against the implementation of the new e-Governance project.
C. Change management strategies adopted during the implementation and in the sustaining the new system.
D. Major learnings from the overall program.

3. Background

Transforming a crowded, manually working Passport office to a transparent, public friendly Seva Kendras is expected to be welcomed by all. However in the region at Tiruchirappalli there was a strong inertia for change to e-Governance mode. Based on the working experience of close to 5 years on this, the first author of this case observes the following reasons as the hurdles to implementation, which also demanded special management strategies to the change.

Challenges specific to Tiruchirappalli office:

• Tiruchirappalli Passport office covers 8 central districts of Tamil Nadu some of which are major exporters of illiterate and semi-literate manpower to Gulf and South East Asian Countries. As the Passport played a role of an 'economic document' in this region and it carried huge demand among the public.

• In spite of online appointments till June 2011, people had to spend the whole day at the passport office most of the times. This was due to several reasons like not giving the appointment time, literacy levels of applicants, verification of documents to be uploaded online etc.

• Travel agents were authorised to take care of the verification of documents to tide over the excessive work load.

4. First roll out of Passport Seva Project (PSP) in Tiruc hirappalli.

In order to address the aforesaid challenges, it was found necessary to bring in an integrated solution that would help ease the complete process. The solution was found to be ready after initial pilots at two locations in the Country – namely the Passport Seva Project (PSP). The project – by use of information and Communication Technology (ICT) brings in speed, transparency and convenience to citizens. It was decided to adopt the same at Trichy. When the implementation of the PSP as per e-Governance model was announced at Trichy it had more resistance than acceptance. The resistances were from both internal and external stakeholders.
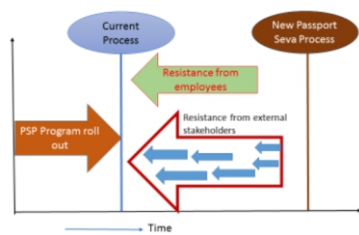
5. The resistance from Stake-holders

1. Resistance from internal stakeholders – the Staff
a) Resistance from the employee Union
b) On analysis and discussion with some key persons, it is found the following were possible reasons for such resistance:

a. An insecurity feeling among staffs –may lead to loss of their jobs.
b. As the new procedure was easy and public friendly, the staff felt they lost their power and 'status' – encroachment on their 'authority'.
c. Co-location of private staff from TCS (the provider of PSP services) for delivering the service – intolerance and insecurity

2. Resistance from external stakeholders – The travel agents
Travel agents were the main players against the new process. There was reportedly concern on the 'perceived loss of control' and that of revenue for them.

Intentional leaks of minor flaws or initial teething problems to blow it

up and provide feed to media with an attempt to sabotage the entry of the new system of passport processing

Figure 1.
The scenario at the time of new Passport Seva Process (PSP) introduction

The scenario at the time of introduction of Passport Seva Project is depicted in Figure 1 above. The roll out of new PSP process and the resistances from internal and external stakeholders stopping the process is shown pictorially.

6. Change Management Strategies adopted in the introduction of the new process

1. Introduction
It was needed to enlist the support of the internal staff of the Passport office to ensure successful deployment of the new Passport Seva project. The apprehensions and fears as listed earlier in the report have been understood after discussions. There was an urgent need to assure the staff that the new process would help them perform their jobs better. Several steps were taken up, many of them with the help of a small change team and it was rolled out. These have been listed below:

2. Actions Taken for Internal Stakeholders
In the case of internal stakeholders the resistance to introduction of the new system of passport was high and multi-folded – including those from the union. However, actions were taken to overcome the resistance, make the staff understand the need and urgency to change to the new system. These multiple steps helped succeed in the effort. The same is shown in Figure 2. The details are not given here, as the focus of the article is mainly external stakeholders.

Figure 2.
Enabling Actions: Dealing with Internal resistance – Official and Unofficial
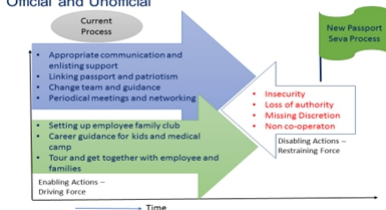
3. Resistance from external Stakeholders
When the new system was to be introduced, the travel agents were taken into confidence appropriately and officially. In order to make the effort a success, they needed to become supportive of the new process. Though the travel agents were briefed and thought to have been taken into confidence, the ground reality was far from satisfactory. The travel agents were seemingly an integral part of the passport application process and the new system would eliminate their involvement almost completely. Thus there was a sense of loose of power / their hand in the passport application process and thus loose of business for them. They either jointly thru their association or in their individual capacity have resorted to multi-pronged crusade against the introduction of the new system.

a)   Filing several cases (on fictitious and imaginary) grounds, in the civil courts on the introduction of the new system based on flimsy reasons.

a.   Writ Petition filed by TA Association of Trichirapalli at Madurai Bench of Madras High Court against the Passport Seva Project.

b.   TAs and brokers alleged that (i) the PSP system is unfriendly to public, (ii) applicants are harassed at PSK by keeping the applications onhold at PSK and escalated to Passport back office (old passport office) and (iii) appointments to PSK were not available or much delay in access.

c.   An old consumer case against Regional Passport Officer was dug up by vested interest group and arrest warrant to Regional Passport Officer was issued through a consumer court of Madurai. TA s Planted a parliament question (no 434) on the validity of SAC and the authority to start it. (MEA, 2015)

b)   Reaching out through bad media publicity about the new system
c)   Subtle and direct threat to the staff of the Passport Office persuading them to resist the change
d)   Getting down to street with voices of protests in various forms and shades with an aim to defunct the new process.

The energy, patience and the amount of thinking that needed to manage these multipronged resistance was the major issue that was addressed as part of the change. It was due to the persistence, patience and problem solving ability of the teams that were led by the first author that helped tide over these resistances. The actions taken to address the above are described in the following paragraphs.

a.   Launching of Social audit.
In order to develop further transparency in Passport issuance and gain goodwill from the public, a new Social Audit Cell (SAC) was opened in the Office . The SAC, was a significant process improvement over the then prevailing public grievance redressal mechanism. Under SAC, applicants can audit their own pending applications and all the information that are to be provided under RTI Act were provided in hard copies free of cost to the applicants. It was well received by the public especially applicants hailing from rural areas. To help illiterate public, voice announcements systems were put in place so that there is complete and comprehensive approach.

Outcome:
- Reduced pendency of applications
- Less number of visits to passport office by the applicants
- Increased productivity of staff
- Increased public appointments per day
- Reduction in waiting time to get appointment (from 30 days to next day in a duration of 8 months).

b.   Passport help desk:
In order to counter the submission of fake application or documents and to prevent the duping of innocent rural citizens by travel agents a Passport Help Desk was set up. These helps desks were manned by trained ex-service men who helped to get applications and upload online.

Outcome:
- Reduction in fake applications
- Rural applicants need not travel to passport office
- Ex-service men provided all the support needed for the rural applicants to file with proper explanations.

c.   Conducting of events - Emigration Mela:
To create awareness among rural illiterate passport applicants, special Emigration Awareness Camps were organized at District Levels. Protector of Emigrant (POE) from Chennai was brought to directly interact and clarify doubts of public. Involving senior Police officers from the district in this unique awareness camp and making them respond to doubts of public on police verification and legal migration was well received by the attendees of the event. The entire

session was recorded and telecast in local television channels. Pamphlets with details of Indian embassy services, the toll-free number of POE and Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana insurance scheme of government were distributed.

Outcome:
- Increased awareness on the emigration rules
- Connect' with the target group by the respective officials
- Wider publicity of the procedure

d. Conducting Passport Mela on holidays:
With a view to reduce the congestion for appointment at the Passport Seva Kendra, special Mela's were organized. These were driven by the need of the season or need of the specific groups on travel. Typical melas were thematic and focused on certain specific needs.

- Week end melas
- Haj pilgrims mela
- Police officers Mela
- Media persons mela

Outcome:
- Reduction in the waiting time to get the appointment (from 30 days to almost next day)
- Focused groups on specific needs (like Haj pilgrims)
- Building strong public support and public friendly approach.

e. Adopting C-Governance for e Governance
It was observed during random check in the crowded grievance cell area - posing as a common applicant, the first author, interacted with the other applicants. This helped to gather information about their struggle with the system and their inability to overcome them – incomplete information, lack of proper official response etc. A meeting was arranged with all staff where such applicants were asked to narrate the problems they faced in front of all. Such realistic stories of a common man amidst the staff members had created a tremendous impact among staff, public and even in media, due to the 'understanding' of the problem faced. In this way, it is noted that inculcating a culture of "Compassionate Governance" (C-Governance) among government officials served as a precursor to moving towards electronic governance (e-Governance).

Outcome:
- Understanding by the staff, of what a common man faces to get their travel documents
- Emotional connect with the public
- Positive opinion by the public at large due to the quick resolutions and compassionate dealing with the applicants (enhancement of brand value)

f. Treating everyone Equal
Passport offices were called by the change team as 'all are Very Important Person (VIP)' office. Same treatment and same rules were applied by the first author (the Regional Passport Officer) to a common man as done with the VIPs. This 'all are VIP role modeling' by Regional Passport Officer sent a positive message to staff and built confidence among the public.

Outcome:
- No discrimination – seen or felt by the common man
- Fair dealing of applications and processing
- Transparency

g. Spreading the Green Message (eco-friendliness)
Harnessing an average of around 2000 people visiting the passport office, it was thought appropriate to 'capture' their attention and make them as 'ambassadors of eco-friendliness'. By liaising with the local District Forest Officer (DFO), a nursery was started at Passport Office Campus. Free saplings were distributed to the visiting public. Also, a banner was constructed to the public with a request message

'For the economic benefit of home, you are traveling abroad. For the Nation's benefit plant a sapling and travel', persuading them to plant the saplings!

Outcome:
- Reaching out to public with saplings to plant in one place with key message
- The banner has an emotional appeal for planting a sapling
- Acted as a bridge beyond the passport processing with the public.

h. Know your nest: A mini library on Indian history
By liaising with District Librarian, a Mini Library was opened within the waiting hall in Passport office and in Seva Kendra. Chosen collection of books on Indian culture, science, medicine architecture and History were provided in the library. Crowded applicants waiting in the queue at the visitor's hall were given free access to this library to make use of their idle time for reading. Know your nest is a concept is to know more about the long history and values of our country ('nest') before they fly abroad. This sensible approach was appreciated by local writer's club and media.

Outcome:
- Effective use of waiting time for the literate applicant
- Knowing the history and culture for a foreign visitor or immigrant – helps a lot in connecting back
- Creating a friendly environment at the waiting hall.

I. Motivating the Youth
Many student interaction programs were organized by visiting school and colleges in the city. Motivational lectures were given on value of education, patriotism and social concern. Awareness was spread on the topic of Digital India and how it could contribute to 'ease of doing businesses and towards our common growth. Special drive for student's passport application was also held

Outcome:
- Awareness creation among youth
- Connect with public
- Generating goodwill, beyond routine work

In summary, as narrated, each of the stakeholder groups has been addressed with specific or tailor made solutions. The thoughts and putting them into action was a team effort lead by the first author. These activities slowly created a positive vibration among the public.

3. Other enabling factors / actions planned:
a. Spreading the service further
To counter the allegation that the passport Seva Kendra as being unfriendly and unreachable for the illiterate public, Post offices and Tashildar Offices were brought into. Appropriate official arrangements (by way of Memorandum of Understanding) were made with post offices and tashidar's office to enable them accept the online application for passports. This helped not only spread the wings, but also reduced the distance the applicant had to travel.

b. Support from the leadership:
The senior officers of Ministry of External Affairs or that of Passport Officers were very supportive of actions taken by the first author (Regional Passport Officer, Trichy) during the entire process of the e-governance program implementation. It should be recorded that without their support the project would not have been successful.

c. Networking with Important Persons.
All the awareness programs and events were inaugurated by public representatives, VIPs, senior officials in the district administration/police department. This has gained goodwill among public, police, public representatives and authorities of various departments.

d. PSP user forum and open debate:
A Passport user forum was created at RPO Tiruchirappalli and regular meetings were organized. In the meeting, public, local VIPs, Travel Agents, public representatives, Passport applicants, frequent travelers, NGOs and officials of various department viz. Passport, police and postal participated. This enabled not only an open discussion forum but also helped change the mindset of certain stakeholders who were resisting the change to the new process.

Support from social media:
A Facebook page was created to register the grievance and complaints of applicants. The grievance redressal mechanism in office was strengthened in all possible ways.
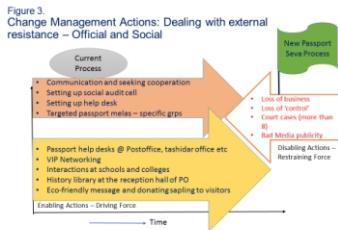

Figure 3.
Change Management Actions: Dealing with external resistance – Official and Social

Figure 3 above depicts the details given. Overall the there was an improvement and the benefits of the project implementation was realized.

7. Relating the actions in this case to the Change Management Models:

1. John Kotters' Model of Change Management:

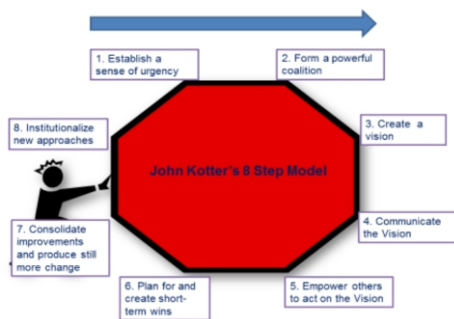Given the scenario, it is worth exploring the John Kotter's model of Change that is given in Figure 4.

Figure 4. John Kotter's Model of Change
The eight steps are comprehensive to address the change management. A brief description follows:

1. Establish a sense of urgency: Assess the current situation and look for the future scenario – based on the gaps perceived, create a 'felt need' for change.
2. Form powerful coalition: Assembling a team of people to be involved in the process.
3. Create a Vision: Building a Vision for change along with the team and developing a strategic approach.
4. Communicate the Vision: Communicating the Vision and associated strategies for change, expected behaviours and outcome anticipated etc to the larger group of people or stake holders.
5. Empower others to act on the Vision: This is to include more people into the change process and enable their movement forward by removing any obstacles that may arise.
6. Plan for create short term wins: Plan, look for and publish visible short term improvements ("low hanging fruits") of the change process to demonstrate the commitment and success of the change.

7. Consolidate improvements and produce still more change: Reward and recognize people achieving changes and keep moving forward with speed and vigour.
8. Institutionalize new approaches: Ensuring that the changes have become part of the standard operating procedures of the organization.

The above steps are generic in nature and works well in an established organizational set up and also among the organizations that work on command and control set up.

2. Kurt Lewin's Model of Force Field Analysis:
The Lewin's Model of Force Field Analysis suggests that any change from current situation to a future desired situation requires to increase the driving force (enabling force) and reduction of restraining force. This is a powerful model that gives pointers for a successful change. The actions to ensure successful change requires the reduction of restraining force and increase of driving force. AS can be seen from the above narration of the scenarios and the pictorial representations (Figure 2 and Figure 3), efforts were taken to increase the driving force and reduce the restraining force through thoughtful actions.

However, the application of the above models to the situation narrated is more of a retrofit. The actions were not planned at the initial stage of the roll out of the Passport Seva Process. If it was planned and well executed, the efforts and pains of change would have been much less.

3. Summary:
From the narration of actions taken described earlier in this report and referring to the two models indicated above, it is evident that the steps taken were in line with the popular and proven models of change. However, application of actions in this case were done purely based on the need, situation and the consideration for the common man.

8. Learnings and action steps for future
The roll out of Passport Seva Process based ICT technology gave a lot of experience to the authors. The change management effort was enormous and it needed a lot of support from various quarters and stakeholders. Listed below are some valuable lessons learnt as part of the roll out. This may not be an exhaustive one. Figure 5 depicts it pictorially.
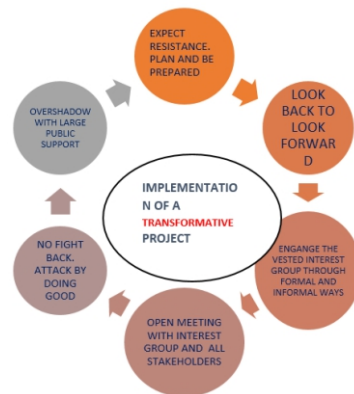

Figure 5. Steps to deal with change under adverse conditions.

9. Key learnings
1. The first lesson derived is that 'a public servant cannot presume in every circumstance, that a transformational public service project would be welcomed by all corners simply because it is good for public'.

2. In order to 'look forward' towards implementation of a large scale

e-Governance project, one needs to 'look back' into the old system and identify every formal and informal stakeholder affected by the project both positively and negatively.

3. Identification of and dealing with stakeholders shall continue till the project is completed. Because, there may be new stakeholders emerging during execution of the project while those who were there initially may vanish or change their stance on the project.

4. It is to be noted and recognized that there could be some *invisible stakeholders having some 'unofficial / undue' benefits. These* may not come out in open but definitely oppose the project and cause hindrance in unexpected ways. Dealing with such stakeholders and addressing the issues caused by them requires leadership that functions beyond the title – keeping the past in mind and charter a course of action to counter the resistance and move forward. It demands leadership beyond the job title.

6. The change management tactics learnt from the participatory action research in implementing passport seva is that a bureaucrat posted to implement a new project, cannot (or need not) counter the deep rooted vested interest lobby that might work against the project by 'taking the bull by horns' methods. It might be frustrating or risky in certain cases. *When allegations on integrity is raised by pressure group, the officer shall take help of his knowledge, experience and consultations to prove his integrity by out of box actions towards public welfare rather than proving to the opponents and giving them the upper hand of being a judge.*

7. With this PSP experience it shall be said that negative pressure group is not majority in numbers in any system. *Though they are few they appear to be strongly united and ferocious, the positive group among staff or public is the actual majority and the main challenge for the leader of a project is to unite them or at least to get their attention towards the solution.* One of the easier way is to focusing on their requirements through innovative services.

8. There is a need to enrol a representative from the Judiciary with a knowledge on implementation of the legal framework for the proposed e-Governance project. This would help in enlisting and adapting the project implementation in line with the legal requirement or modifying the legal system to suit the project implementation in advance. Such move will not only strengthen the conviction of the implementing officer, but also serve as a deterrent to sections of stakeholders intending to sabotage the project implementation.

9. The above strategies were planned and executed extempore under the evolving circumstances and it cannot be claimed as a complete success or a replicable model.

10. Conclusion
The overall actions taken and the outcomes thereof, encourage and provide a repository of action steps for adopting and applying to several circumstances.

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