

Integrating Measurement and Meaning: The Embodied Spiral of Change in Organizational Transformation

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Abstract: This paper explores the multidimensional nature of organizational transformation by integrating empirical evidence from Georgian business organizations with an embodied and symbolic perspective on leadership and change. Based on a quantitative study of 147 senior managers across eight organizations, the research identifies core deficiencies in local change management practices, including organizational procrastination, managerial inertia, and the absence of standardized methodologies such as PDCA, PESTEL, and SWOT. These findings reveal that while analytical awareness of change exists, it rarely translates into embodied, sustainable action. To address this, the study introduces the Integrated Self-Diagnosis and Measurement Framework (ISDMF), designed to internalize disciplined change through self-accountability and continuous measurement. Extending this framework, the paper conceptualizes the Embodied Spiral of Change—a dynamic model linking cognitive, emotional, and behavioral readiness of leaders to organizational adaptability. The embodied dimension reframes change not only as a procedural transformation but as a lived process of meaning-making and alignment between individual awareness and collective evolution. The study thus bridges quantitative rigor with human-centered insight, offering a new lens for developing resilient leadership cultures in transitional economies.

Keywords: Organizational Change, Embodied Leadership, Change Management, Transformation, Meaning-Making, Self-Diagnostic and Measurement Framework

Introduction

Change management is a systematic and structured process of developing and implementing strategies and interventions that help organizations transition from a current state to a desired state. Its primary goal is to enhance organizational capability and adaptability in response to internal or external shifts (King & Anderson, 1995). Successful change management involves preparation, implementation, and institutionalization – three phases that determine whether change becomes sustainable (Lewin, 1947). This study highlights that within Georgian organizations, change often remains superficial and reactive rather than embedded as an ongoing cultural capability. The research builds on established frameworks (Jones, 2004; Rhodes & Scheeres, 2004) to contextualize change management as both a technical and human process, requiring not only structural strategy but embodied participation. Integrated Self-Diagnosis and Measurement Framework (ISDMF) can be integrated with embodied leadership principles to form a spiral model of organizational transformation, where meaning, measurement, and human experience are unified.

Change Management Challenges in Georgian Business Organizations

In Georgia's transitional economy, change management practices face cultural and structural challenges. Hierarchical control, limited trust, and content-over-culture orientation create obstacles for participative change (Cummings & Worley, 2015). While Western frameworks like Kotter's (1996) or ADKAR are increasingly referenced, their application is often partial or symbolic. Georgian organizations tend to favor compliance and formality over genuine behavioral adaptation. Low managerial emotional intelligence and limited skill in participative leadership slow down

transformational initiatives. The result is a consistent ‘implementation gap’: knowledge without action, awareness without embodiment, and decisions without accountability.

The study situates these findings within the cultural context of Georgian business, where respect for hierarchy, uncertainty avoidance, and group loyalty coexist with emerging modernization and Westernization trends (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2018). Recent surveys indicate that the understanding of change management principles remains limited among many mid-level managers, while senior executives tend to adopt a top-down approach that prioritizes formal compliance over participative engagement. This combination results in fragmented implementation and, in many cases, postponed or superficial changes (Babbie, 2017).

The success rate of change initiatives in Georgia is often influenced by ingrained structural and cultural characteristics that deviate significantly from those found in developed Western economies. These include structural and cultural impediments (Cummings & Worley, 2015):

- *Rigid Hierarchies and Centralization:* Many Georgian companies retain rigid, centralized, and bureaucratic structures, where decision-making power is heavily concentrated at the top. This centralized authority stifles bottom-up initiatives, slows the pace of necessary adaptation (especially to technological change), and actively discourages the broad participation vital for successful transitional change;
- *Low-Trust Environments:* The prevalence of low-trust environments—both internal (between management and employees) and external (between organizations and regulatory bodies)—creates significant barriers. Internally, low trust exacerbates employee resistance, complicates delegation, and makes the effective, transparent communication required by modern change models (like Kotter’s 8-Step) highly difficult to execute;
- *Organizational Cultural Norms:* Cultural factors often dictate that adherence to tradition and the avoidance of risk take precedence over innovation and experimentation. This dynamic fundamentally clashes with the requirements of transformational change, which demands a shift in mindset and a willingness to embrace uncertainty (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2018);
- *Limited Managerial Change Leadership Capacity:* While managers may possess strong technical or operational skills, there is often a deficit in soft skills crucial for change leadership, such as emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, and the ability to articulate a compelling vision for change (as required by Goleman’s authoritative style). This limited capacity hinders the ability to address the “People” and “Process” dimensions of change effectively;
- *Focus on Content Over Culture:* The legacy of prior corporate practices often leads to an over-reliance on content-focused changes (e.g., buying new technology or issuing a new policy) while critically neglecting the cultural and mindset imperatives required to sustain behavioral shifts. This results in change initiatives that appear successful initially but fail in the long run due to lack of cultural adoption (Nadler, 1980).

Research Goal

The study aims to determine the extent to which Georgian organizations comprehend the essence and necessity of change, and whether they perceive change implementation as a means of improving processes and achieving higher organizational performance. Furthermore, the research seeks to examine whether various types of changes, including organizational, structural, digital, and others, are perceived as having a positive impact on future operations. It also aims to identify the criteria used to assess the effectiveness of change initiatives and to determine whether implemented changes achieve their intended goals.

Finally, the study seeks to identify the key factors that determine whether a change has been successful or unsuccessful, and to extract lessons that can inform better planning and management of future change processes in the Georgian context.

Respondent Involvement and Methodology

The study involved 147 managerial-level respondents across eight organizations: PSP (pharmaceuticals), Knauf (construction), LTB (furniture), Elit Electronics (retail), Georgian Railway, the National Agency of Public Registry, Loyalty (audit), and Georgian State Electric System. Data were collected via a five-point Likert scale questionnaire and analyzed using the one-sample *t*-test ($\alpha = .05$). While the empirical data derive from general Georgian business organizations ($N = 147$), the prevalence of centralized control and bureaucratic inertia suggests distinct pathways of resistance across sectors:

- Private Sector Resistance Resistance primarily arises from low-trust environments, inadequate strategic communication, and an overemphasis on Content over Culture. Despite intense competitive pressures, the persistence of rigid, top-down decision-making structures often results in change initiatives that fail due to insufficient cultural adoption and employee buy-in.
- Public Sector Resistance (Inferred) In the public sector, resistance is likely amplified by entrenched bureaucratic structures and politicization, which foster a culture of inaction and prioritize status quo preservation over strategic transformation. Stringent legal and political constraints—while necessary—can institutionalize risk aversion, further stifling the innovation required for effective change (Likert, 1932).

The failure of Georgian organizations to implement change management effectively—as evidenced by the absence of structured planning (H6) and sustained process improvement (H4)—directly contributes to national economic underperformance. When organizations consistently neglect change management standards, the consequences are systemic:

- Reduced Competitiveness: Reliance on outdated “historical views” rather than proactive adaptation to environmental imperatives (e.g., rapid technological advancements) erodes international competitiveness.
- Resource Inefficiency: Failed change initiatives (H4) result in wasted resources, diminished productivity, and elevated turnover.

Barrier to ‘Doing Business’: In a transitional economy, attracting foreign investment hinges on perceived organizational stability and efficiency. Systemic inertia—characterized by procrastination, unpredictability, and internal conflict—creates a significant institutional obstacle to modernization and ease of doing business.

The core issue is not the absence of models but the lack of disciplined adoption. This research addresses this challenge directly through the development of a context-specific Integrated Self-Diagnosis and Measurement Framework which enforces internal accountability and bridges the gap between global theory and local practice.

Recent surveys confirm that mid-level managers exhibit limited understanding of change management principles, while senior executives favor top-down approaches, prioritizing formal compliance over participative engagement. This dynamic leads to fragmented, delayed, or superficial change implementation.

- Public Sector: Georgian public institutions are marked by high bureaucratic rigidity and strict adherence to formal procedures, which significantly impede change initiatives. Administrative inertia, political interference, and procedural complexity delay strategic decisions and undermine program effectiveness. Transparency International (2023) notes that accountability mechanisms remain weakly enforced, fostering an environment where reforms are symbolic rather than transformative. Hierarchical decision-making further discourages initiative among lower-level staff and inhibits

collaborative problem-solving. Fear of political or supervisory repercussions promotes risk aversion, exacerbating resistance and reducing organizational agility.

- Private Sector: In contrast, private organizations, particularly those exposed to international markets or foreign investment, demonstrate greater flexibility and are more likely to adopt modern frameworks such as Lean, Agile, or Total Quality Management (TQM). However, challenges persist. Success hinges on organizational culture, leadership competency, and employee engagement.

Cultural dimensions, such as high uncertainty avoidance, collectivism, and hierarchical orientation, can generate resistance or slow adoption. Leaders with high cultural intelligence (CQ) are better equipped to address employee concerns, articulate the rationale for change, and align staff with shared goals (Tichy, 1986). According to the World Bank, Georgia's 'Doing Business' indicators reveal persistent difficulties in regulatory compliance, administrative efficiency, and institutional support. Organizations face bureaucratic hurdles, inconsistent regulation enforcement, and limited guidance—collectively obstructing the adoption of standardized methodologies (World Bank Group, 2024). This disconnect underscores the urgent need for contextually adapted frameworks that integrate global best practices with local constraints. Without such adaptation, change processes remain delayed, incomplete, or ineffective – limiting competitiveness, innovation, and sustainable growth.

Formalized Research Hypotheses:

H₀₁: Risks are not assessed during organizational change initiatives. **H₁:** Risks are assessed during organizational change initiatives.

H₀₂: Employee expectations are not considered during organizational change. **H₂:** Employee expectations are considered during organizational change.

H₀₃: External environmental factors are not analyzed in the context of organizational change. **H₃:** External environmental factors are analyzed in the context of organizational change.

H₀₄: Organizational work processes are not improved as a result of change initiatives. **H₄:** Organizational work processes are improved as a result of change initiatives.

H₀₅: The role of a dedicated change manager is not recognized by organizations. **H₅:** The role of a dedicated change manager is recognized by organizations.

H₀₆: Standard change management methodologies (PDCA, PESTEL, SMART, SWOT) are not deployed; organizations rely primarily on historical experience rather than structured frameworks. **H₆:** Standard change management methodologies (PDCA, PESTEL, SMART, SWOT) are deployed; organizations do not rely solely on historical experience.

Statistical Testing: Student's t-test To test the hypotheses and assess statistical significance, the study employs the one-sample Student's t-test. This method determines whether the mean response from the sample differs significantly from a neutral or theoretically expected value (typically 3.0 on a 5-point Likert scale, representing 'neutral' or 'no systematic practice').

Each of the nine survey items corresponds to a specific hypothesis. For each item the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) are computed. The sample mean is compared against the reference value ($\mu_0 = 3.0$). A significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$ is applied ($p < .05$ indicates rejection of H_0). This approach ensures a reliable, interpretable, and replicable evaluation of whether observed practices deviate significantly from neutral or expected benchmarks.

Each organization employs more than 250 staff, with several public entities exceeding 1,500 employees. This variation in size and sectoral specificity enables a heterogeneous analysis of change management practices across operational and institutional contexts. The inclusion of both public and private entities – spanning regulated monopolies, competitive markets, and administrative bureaucracies – strengthens the generalizability of findings and reveals cross-sectoral patterns in change adoption, resistance, and effectiveness.

Results and Analysis

Analytical Protocol Six null hypotheses (H_0) were tested using one-sample t-tests to determine whether standard change management practices are systematically absent in Georgian organizations. Each hypothesis corresponded to one or more of the nine Likert-scale survey items (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). The reference value was set at $\mu_0 = 3.0$ (neutral/no systematic practice). A significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$ was applied.

$$r_1, \dots, r_m \quad (1)$$

In our case $m = 9$ et n_j denote the number of responses for each question $j = 1, \dots, 9$. i.e. those are the ones testing each hypothesis.

The data was collected from 147 respondents in total. However, for each question,

$$n_j = \sum_{i=1}^{147} I_{\left\{\frac{r_{j1}+r_{j2}+r_{j3}}{3} > 3\right\}} \quad (2)$$

Where r_j denotes the response of a given respondent for the j^{th} question. i.e. the integer number between 1 to 5. This way we have responses the for the j^{th} questions for $j = 1, \dots, 9$ which are $r_{j1}, r_{j2}, \dots, r_{jn_i}$.

First three questions check the frequency of changes undertaken within an organization. The following questions are aimed to individually determine answers for each hypothesis. (e.g. whether the risks are measured at the stage of organizational changes for the first hypothesis).

In order to test the given hypothesis, we apply the student's t test. We take

$$\bar{r}_j = \frac{1}{n_j} \sum_{i=1}^{n_j} r_{ji} \quad (3)$$

to be the sample mean and

$$s_j = \sqrt{\frac{1}{n-1} \sum_{i=1}^{n_j} (r_{ji} - \bar{r}_j)^2} \quad (4)$$

denotes the sample standard deviation for the j^{th} question. The test statistics for the hypothesis test is given by the following formula

$$t = \frac{(\bar{r}_j - \mu_{j0})}{\frac{s_j}{n_j}} \quad (5)$$

which is compared to $t_{n-1, \alpha}$ for a given significance level α which is 5% in our case.

Table 1. Results of Hypotheses

	Hypothesis 1	Hypothesis 2	Hypothesis 3	Hypothesis 4	Hypothesis 5	Hypothesis 6
n	35	61	87	82	41	15
mean	3.828571429	3.704918033	3.862068966	3.012195122	2.731707317	3.266666667
s	0.984757787	1.295431232	1.339666861	1.094248741	1.140710091	1.387014608
t(n-1)	1.690924255	1.670648865	1.662765449	1.663883913	1.683851013	1.761310136
t	4.97776686	4.250002394	6.002122055	0.100919948	-1.506001739	0.744617651
Decision	Reject H ₀	Reject H ₀	Reject H ₀	Do not reject H ₀	Do not reject H ₀	Do not reject H ₀

Georgian organizations understand the why of change but fail at the how. There is a significant execution gap between awareness and disciplined implementation. Change initiatives collapse not due to ignorance, but due to organizational procrastination, managerial inertia, and unsustainable execution—systemic barriers that undermine long-term transformation. This diagnosis directly informs the development of the ISDMF, designed to enforce planning rigor, leadership accountability, and measurable outcomes.

The primary contribution of this study is the development of the ISDMF—a multi-dimensional, internally driven change management system specifically tailored to the Georgian organizational context. Designed as a sustainable countermeasure to organizational inertia, managerial procrastination, and over-reliance on external consultants, the ISDMF enables organizations to self-assess, self-correct, and institutionalize disciplined change practices without ongoing third-party intervention (Aiken & Keller, 2009).

Table 2. The Self-Diagnosis and Action (SDA) Cycle

Stage	Focus Area	Mandatory Action	Outcome/Procrastination Countermeasure
1. DIAGNOSE (The ‘Unfreeze’ Phase)	Confronting Reality & Risk	Internal teams must conduct PESTEL (External Factors), SWOT (Internal Resources), and Formal Risk Assessment (H1).	Forces the start; avoids delaying the unpleasant truth by mandating a structured analytical output (countering H6).
2. DESIGN (The ‘Plan’ Phase)	Expectation Alignment	Translate analysis into clear goals (SMART criteria) and create an Employee Expectation Survey (EES) to align goals with staff input (H2).	Creates buy-in; ensures planning is not top-down but integrated with main players’ motivations.
3. DEPLOY (The ‘Do’ Phase)	Execution & Oversight	Appoint a Change Champion (internal equivalent of H5) to manage communication and execution; break execution into small, ‘frog-eating’ tasks with non-negotiable deadlines.	Ensures momentum; tasks become manageable, directly fighting the Procrastination tendency.
4. DEVELOP (The ‘Check & Act’ Phase)	Internalization & Adaptation	Conduct mid-term feedback sessions and compare results to initial SMART goals; the Change Champion documents lessons learned and updates internal Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).	Achieves sustainability; institutionalizes the learned experience, preventing the organization from being left ‘alone with problems’ after the cycle concludes.

The SDA Cycle is a closed-loop, self-reinforcing model that institutionalizes continuous cultural monitoring and corrective action, directly countering behavioral rigidity, toxic inertia, and resistance to change. By transforming the organization into its own primary agent of transformation, the cycle moves beyond episodic interventions to enable sustained, internally driven improvement.

The cycle comprises three interdependent phases:

Phase 1: Self-Diagnosis; Objective: Establish a data-driven baseline of cultural health; Core Activities:

- Regular deployment of Psychological Safety Surveys and Value Congruence Audits;
- Quantification of toxicity drivers (e.g., trust deficits, low engagement) using empirically validated metrics from this study;
- Establishment of transparent reporting dashboards to maintain visibility of the “burning platform.”

Outcome: Cultural health is treated as a measurable strategic asset, equivalent to financial KPIs, eliminating reliance on anecdotal perception and overcoming complacency and cynicism.

Phase 2: Targeted Action; Objective: Execute high-precision interventions aligned with diagnostic findings; Core Activities:

- If low psychological safety: Mandate Transformational Leadership Training + formal Safe Feedback Mechanisms;
- If value misalignment: Realign performance management systems with ethical adherence; enforce leadership accountability protocols;
- Resource allocation governed by diagnostic priority scores—no generic programs.

Outcome: Change efforts are focused, efficient, and evidence-based, preventing resource dilution on misdiagnosed issues.

Phase 3: Re-Evaluation and Institutionalization; Objective: Close the loop through measurement, learning, and norm embedding; Core Activities:

- Track leading indicators (e.g., psychological safety scores) and lagging indicators (e.g., turnover, innovation success rate).
- Success → Formalize new norms in policy, incentives, and onboarding (Apply Lewin’s ‘refreezing’ principle);
- Deficiency → Trigger new diagnosis cycle with refined metrics.

Outcome: A perpetual learning system that builds long-term cultural resilience and prevents regression.

The SDA Cycle represents the operational core of the ISDMF. It shifts Georgian organizations from awareness without action to disciplined, self-sustaining transformation—a locally grounded, globally informed mechanism for lasting change.

Integrated Self-Diagnosis and Measurement Framework (ISDMF)

The primary contribution of this work is the development of the Integrated Self-Diagnosis and Measurement Framework (ISDMF)—a prescriptive, internally driven system that directly counters the systemic inertia, procrastination, and resource inefficiency revealed by the empirical findings (H₀₄–H₀₆).

The Self-Diagnosis and Action (SDA) Cycle

- Diagnose – Analyze risks and context through PESTEL/SWOT.
- Design – Align employee expectations and objectives.
- Deploy – Implement through internal Change Champions.
- Develop – Reflect, measure, and institutionalize learning.

This cycle converts static planning into a living organizational rhythm-discipline embodied through participation and feedback.

Holistic Change Effectiveness Index (HCEI) integrates four dimensions of transformation:

- Behavioral Shift
- Emotional and Cognitive Adaptation
- Process Effectiveness
- Strategic and Lagged Impact

These dimensions create a composite index that measures not only what changed but **how** change lives within organizational culture.

Practical Extensions of ISDMF

- The Best Practices Journal of Organizational Change (Georgian Case) establishes a confidential, cross-organizational platform for anonymous submission of SDA Cycle outcomes, quarterly curated reports of anonymized case studies, and sector-specific working groups. By breaking knowledge silos, it converts individual experiments into collective intelligence, enabling LTB's process innovations to inform Elite and Public Registry risk protocols to benefit Georgian Railway.
- The Guideline for Change Management in Georgia is a culturally calibrated playbook that adapts global models (Kotter, Lewin, PDCA) to Georgian hierarchical norms, respect networks, and transitional realities. Key adaptations include framing urgency as national duty and family legacy, leveraging informal elder advisors in coalition building, and celebrating short-term wins through public recognition rituals aligned with Georgian hospitality traditions. Delivered as a bilingual visual handbook with one-page SDA templates and an HCEI calculator, it is distributed free of charge via the Georgian Chamber of Commerce, Ministry of Economy, and university partnerships.

Together, these initiatives create a closed national learning loop in which change ceases to be a cost and becomes a shared strategic asset:

Diagnosis → Measurement → Knowledge Sharing → Continuous Improvement

Toward the Embodied Spiral of Change

While the ISDMF quantifies change processes, it remains incomplete without addressing the embodied experience of leadership. Transformation must engage the mind, emotion, and body simultaneously. The Embodied Spiral of Change complements the ISDMF by connecting external metrics with internal awareness. Each SDA phase corresponds to a bodily state:

Table 3. Embodied Spiral of Change and the ISDMF

ISDMF Phase	Embodied Dimension	Focus
Diagnose	Awareness	Sensing misalignment and tension
Design	Alignment	Integrating shared intentions
Deploy	Action	Moving from insight to enactment
Develop	Integration	Stabilizing new patterns of being

In embodied leadership, the organization mirrors the leader's inner coherence. The leader acts as both symbol and sensor – translating meaning into motion. Resistance, then, becomes diagnostic, signaling where organizational intent diverges from collective embodiment. Metrics like the Emotional Adaptation Index and Collaboration Heatmaps can serve as vital signs, measuring cultural pulse and energy rather than mere performance.

Unlike linear change, the spiral implies movement through repetition and elevation. Each cycle deepens awareness and alignment. Cognitive, affective, and somatic levels of leadership evolve together, creating organizations that learn through living.

Conclusion

This research demonstrates that successful transformation in Georgian organizations requires both structural rigor and embodied meaning. ISDMF ensures disciplined measurement and accountability, while Embodied Spiral of Change restores the human center, turning data into dialogue and metrics into movement. Integrated Self-Diagnosis and Measurement Framework (ISDMF) with its Self-Diagnosis and Action (SDA) Cycle and Holistic Change Effectiveness Index (HCEI) delivers a self-contained, replicable system that transforms change management from a reactive crisis response into a proactive, institutionalized competency (George & Jones, 2007).

Organizational change thus becomes a spiral process of becoming, where structure meets consciousness, and measurement converges with meaning. Through this integration, organizations can evolve from reactive management toward resilient, embodied leadership capable of sustaining transformation in complex environments.

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