Muhammad Nauman Mubarak

Guidelines for Middle Managers for Thriving amid Continuous Change

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I am happy to see that finally my thesis is ready and complete. This has been a long but interesting journey. The outcome has been realized with the help of Metropolia school instructors, interviewees, and support of my family. I am thankful to Almighty ALLAH for giving me strength to complete this task that always scared me.

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This thesis suggests the much needed guidelines for middle managers for thriving amid continuous change. Middle managers, being an integral part of their organizations, needed a set of consolidated guidelines for thriving in the times of continuous change. Thriving requires high engagement, learning and growth as a response in stressful situations. The proposed guidelines include elements from literature and recommendations of the middle managers which came from co-creation sessions with middle managers from different industries.

The proposed framework, based on the literature review, suggests that the process management mindset and resilience mindset are suitable for continuous change, where process mindset puts emphasis on collaboration and co-creation in problem solving, and resilience mindset emphasizes bouncing back while maintaining true-self with peak performance to setbacks. In order to apply these mindsets, middle managers have to indulge in personal development for learning new behaviours and getting self-mastery in emotional intelligence, support seeking and obtaining essential competences such as confidence, risk taking, and learning from experiences. It is also argued that without being self-aware and knowing the purpose and meaning in life, middle managers can easily get lost in continuous change situation.

New elements in the proposal as recommended by middle managers include (a) grit: perseverance and passion for long-term goals, (b) efficient change management: effective systematic working, adapting to co-workers, leading change, knowledge of change management best practice, (c) essential management skills: conflict resolution, team and expectation management, (d) finally, new elements in personal development are suggested such as work-life balance, living in present, intuition, growth mindset and self-audit. Overall, with the help of these guidelines, middle managers can thrive in continuous change.

Keywords	Middle managers, continuous change, resilience, thriving, personal development

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1   Introduction

Change has become a constant in the modern world. Management and leadership are facing challenges due to the factors such as continuous change, interdependent, and complex nature of businesses. Continuous change is happening across the businesses due to internal and external factors in the society, industry and organizations. Examples include as layoffs, re-structuring, Mergers and acquisitions, IT projects, disruptive technologies, and demand for multi-disciplined working skills.

The role of management and leadership has become pivotal in this scenario as the success and failure of a company is often associated with the leadership and management of the company. This current situation demands change of mindset and need for acquiring new skill sets to lead and manage the work force in continuous changes.

In terms of dealing with these changes, there are a number of change management guidelines available for top management or change managers. These guidelines focus on managing a single change at one moment of time. However, there are few guidelines for dealing with continuous change in organizations.

At the same time, the role of the middle managers have become crucial especially in today's dynamic and complex working environment for organizations. Middle managers can influence strategist, implement strategy, interpret and disseminate information, and, can act as facilitator or destroyer of ideas generation among people around them. In particular, middle managers are facing the consequences of continuous change. However, there are not many guidelines for middle managers especially, in the time of continuous and simultaneous change.

Middle managers can lead change while doing their respective roles if empowered with right mindset and personal skills. As a result, they can both personally and leadership wise thrive amid continuous change.

Accordingly, the objective of this thesis is to come up with the guidelines to help the middle manager not only to cope successfully but also thrive amid continuous change. The guidelines are co-created with the middle managers from various companies in the form of interviews and discussion.

The qualitative approach is selected to conduct this study, and the unit of analysis of this study is a middle manager working in different industries or fields. The thin and deep analysis approach is adopted because it was desired to know how middle manager is currently managing the continuous change, what factors are affecting him or her amid constant change, what could be the best skills and ways to successfully cope and thrive in the face of continuous change. In data 1, ten middle managers were interviewed. They are working in different organizations at different levels and having different number of years of experience.

The findings show that the suggested guidelines could serve middle managers in different industries, since the outcome of the thesis is a set of generic guidelines in the form of a proposal for middle managers for thriving amid continuous change.

The thesis is arranged in seven chapters. Chapter two is about research design, chapter three about the current state analysis of middle managers facing continuous change, also the companies' perspective is presented. Chapter four presents discussion on change management including continuous change management. It later presents best practice for middle managers from literature. At the end, the conceptual framework of thesis is presented. Chapter five presents the proposal and proposal building process. In chapter six, proposal is validated with the help of middle managers. At the end of chapter six, the final proposal is presented. Chapter seven presents results and conclusions of the thesis.

2 Research Methods and Material

This section discusses research methods used in this thesis. First, research approach is presented and then research design. Data collection 1, 2 and 3 are presented along with analysis methods, and finally, validation and reliability plan of thesis is explained.

2.1 Research Approach

The objective of this study is to formulate guidelines for middle managers to thrive amid continuous change. The objective can be achieved with the case study approach. According to Gary (2011), case studies are analyses of the systems such as persons, events, and decisions etc. that are studied holistically by one or more methods. There are various ways to conduct a case study such as quantitative, qualitative, mixture of these two, explanatory etc. Qualitative dimension of case study approach is found suitable for this thesis because the problem has various dimensions and the solution could be suggested from multiple sources. It means that the outcome could be based on the best practice in literature, as well as the current practices and recommendations of middle managers. Therefore, the selected research strategy is based on qualitative research methods of data collection and analysis as there are some best practice in the literature that could answer the problem and also there are some strengths and weaknesses in the current practices of the middle managers.

The unit of analysis in this study is a middle manager irrespective of his or her position and role in his or her respective company. The average work experience of middle managers is above six years. Almost all of the middle managers were engineers or ICT experts. The type of industry in which middle manager works is not considered in the analysis of data. In fact, the managers were selected randomly from different industries such as engineering and technology e.g., oil and energy, machinery, mining, paper and pulp, and electrical and electronics manufacturing etc. and software and ICT industry.

The process utilized to develop the proposal of the guidelines for this thesis is presented in next section under research design.

2.2 Research Design

In this thesis, research design illustrates all the steps that are carried out to reach the proposal stage, as presented in Figure 1. All the steps are illustrated along with the outcomes. Data collection i.e. data 1, 2 and 3 are shown leading to a specific outcome.
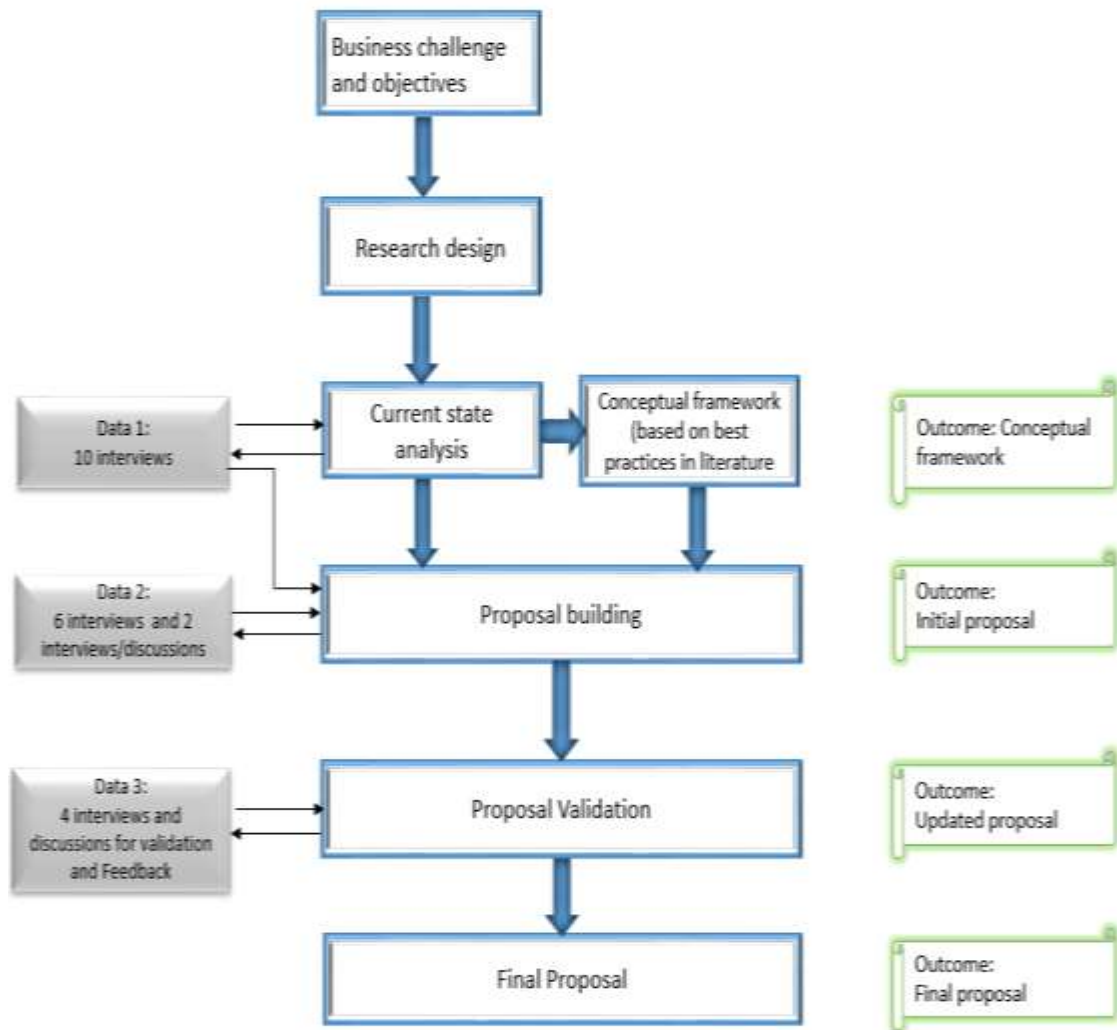
Figure 1. Research design utilized for the thesis.

Figure 1 shows the research design of this thesis. The objective of the thesis is to build a proposal of guidelines for middle managers for thriving in continuous change. This objective is achieved through several steps; i.e. first analysing the current state of the middle managers through field interviews and discussions. There were ten field interviews carried out to know the current state. The analysis of the data 1, pointed out some challenges (weaknesses in this case) faced by the middle managers. The main weakness found was that there is no specific personal continuous change management strategy by middle managers. At the same time, middle managers are affected by the continuous change in many ways. The continuous change challenges (affects) are also taken as weakness to address in this thesis. The current state analysis gave a clue about the areas where to search for best practice in literature.

The relevant best practice for middle managers in literature were searched for and identified. The best practice lead to conceptual framework for this thesis. The conceptual framework served as a basis for proposal building as it was shown to the middle managers in face-to-face discussion for proposal building (data 2). The outcome at the end was an initial proposal of guidelines built with the help of insights and recommendations received from six middle managers and also through face-to-face discussion with three middle managers. All together this was called data 2. Initial proposal contain elements of conceptual framework that were discussed and found appropriate by the middle managers. As middle managers in data 1 were different from those in data 2, therefore, the recommendations of data 1 managers pertaining to proposal building are included in initial proposal.

Additionally, the current state analysis also contributed to proposal building as it has identified challenges faced by the middle manager. Hence, initial proposal is result of data 1 recommendations, the current state analysis (only 'challenges' part), conceptual framework and data 2 (both face to face discussions and insights by the middle managers). Data 1 and 2 and the conceptual framework lead to the proposal which is validated at the end with the discussion and feedback from the middle managers. The feedback is received and the model is subsequently improved based on the feedback. The proposed model of guidelines for middle managers is then defined and presented.

2.3   Data Collection and Analysis

The three different kinds of data i.e. data 1, data 2 and data 3 are utilized in this thesis. Data 1 is utilized for the current state analysis, data 2 for proposal building and data 3 for proposal validation. The data collection was done from different groups of interviewees (middle managers). The interviewees were chosen randomly as can be seen from details in Table 1, Table 2 and Table 3.

The selected interviewees were meeting the criteria of the study i.e. they were middle managers and facing continuous change in their company and/or industry. In data 1, 2 and 3, it was aimed to interview the middle managers from different industries. The middle managers interviewed were mostly from engineering and technological industries. However, some were also from computer software and ICT industries. Each middle manager in data 1, 2 and 3 was from different company and/or department. There were only two mangers from the same company however, their departments were different. Middle

managers' role and position in their respective company were mostly of technical and/or managerial nature, as evident from Table 1. However, data analysis is not based on their role, position or industry, rather it is based on their general opinions about the change, its effects and recommendations for successfully dealing with it.

Interviews and discussion (i.e. data 1 and 2) were carried out as field work in order to know the current state of the phenomenon and the suggested solutions of the phenomenon. Data collection and analysis was done by the qualitative methods with no statistical analysis. Each manager had different role and position. The purpose of doing so was to create a holistic opinion about the phenomenon which could lead to generic suggestions. One common thing among the middle managers was that they all were working in the same country. This could tell about their environment of working. However, the nationality of the interviewees were not same i.e. there were also some non-native interviewees as well in data 1. It is believed that being non-native could not much influence their suggestions as the working conditions were same for all the interviewees in terms of country and corporate culture. Therefore, the opinions of the managers are treated as same irrespective of their industry, role, position and native culture.

In data 1, the middle managers were interviewed for the current state of their working in continuous change. The questions were designed beforehand. The questions were open-ended so that they can lead to discussion. There were six main themes of the interviews that include as (a) what sort of continuous changes happening in their respective companies and or industries and its type as major, medium or minor. (B) How their company is dealing with the change (c) how middle managers and company interact with each other amid continuous change i.e. strategy design, change management and implementation. (d) How continuous change is affecting them i.e. on their work, life and health etc. (e) How they are currently dealing with the change. (f) What is the situation of other companies and industries regarding change? Managers were also asked about the skills required to successfully deal with the continuous change. This part of data 1 is considered suitable for proposal building.

Table 1 shows the details of data collection (of interviewees) for the current state analysis.

Table 1. Data collection 1 for the current state analysis.

No	Participant position and experience	Participant industry and its size	Interview date and duration and type	Documented as	Topics discussed
1.	Technical Account manager 8+ years' experience	Oil and energy sector, 5001-10,000 employees	22.2.2016 Via. Email Exchange	Field notes (App. 1)	Ready-made questions
2.	Product architect 10+ years' experience	Information's technology and Services, 11-50 employees	Face to face 26.2.2016 27 min.	Field notes (App.1)	Interview and Discussion
3.	Professional Manager (VP Engineering) 15 years' experience	Telecommunication, computer software 51-200 employees	Face to face 24.2.2016 39 min.	Field notes (App.1)	Interview and Discussion
4.	Logistic supervisor/ customer service representative , 6 years' experience	Leisure, Travel and Tourism 5001-10,000 employees	Face to face 25.2.2016 33 min.	Field notes (App.1)	Interview and Discussion
5.	Purchasing team leader 7 years experience	Electrical/Electronics Manufacturing, 10,001 + employees	Face to face 2.3.2016 28 min.	Field notes (App.1)	Interview and Discussion
6.	Project manager 7+ years' experience	Electrical/Electronics Manufacturing, 10,001 + employees	Face to face 5.3.2016 16 min.	Field notes (App.1)	Interview and Discussion
7.	Project manager 10 years' experience	Mining and Metal Industry 1001-5000 employees	Face to face 4.3.2016 40 min.	Field notes (App.1)	Interview and Discussion
8.	Technical support and training manager 6 years experience	Mechanical and Industrial engineering 200-500 people	Skype meeting 8.3.2016 28 min.	Field notes (App.1)	Interview and Discussion
9.	Technical sales manager , 6 years experience	Machinery, OEM, Hydraulics industry 200-300 people	Face to face 4.3.2016 25 min.	Field notes (App.1)	Interview and Discussion
10.	Product developer, 6 years experience	Computer software industry, 30-50 people	Face to face 18.2.2016 45 min.	Field notes (App.1)	Interview and Discussion

Table 1 reveals that ten managers were interviewed from different industries having different roles and positions were interviewed. The industries or the companies of the mangers are mostly big corporations. There are also few managers from relatively small companies. The managers were either project managers or team leaders. The meetings usually lasted from thirty to forty minutes. The questions answers and discussion about the topic happened in the same manner. The participation was very active and positive. In order to hide the identification of the interviewees, they are named as informant 1 to informant 10. The respondents are treated as anonymous for confidentiality reasons in data analysis and in later chapters of the study.

The interviews were recorded in personal face-to-face meetings and later transcripts of the interviews were made. All the replies against each question are analysed for themes building. Appendix 1 contains the questions and summary of the answers in data 1. The interview questions were sent to some interviewees beforehand and to some they were shown before the meeting.

In data 2, a different group of middle managers were approached than in data 1. Similarly, for data 3, the group of middle managers was different than data 1 and 2 group. This is done for getting wider opinions from the middle managers about the phenomenon of continuous change and its affects. In this way, the holistic approach showing the whole picture about the phenomenon is established. The order of data collection (data1 to data 2 to data 3) was decided at the start of the studies based on the reason to first know the current state and then develop proposal with the middle managers and finally validate it by asking feedbacks.

Table 2 below shows the details of the informants in proposal building stage.

Table 2, Data collection 2 for proposal building

No	Participant position and experience	Participant industry and its size	Interview date and duration and type	Documented as	Topics discussed
1.	Project Manager 10+ years' experience	Electrical/Electronic Manufacturing 1001-5000 employees	27.4.2016 Via. Email Exchange	Field notes	Ready-made questions
2.	Purchasing Manager	Sporting Goods,	18.4.2016 Via. Email	Field notes	Ready-made questions

	11+ years' experience	201-500 employees	Exchange		
3.	Product Architect 12+ years' experience	Information Technology and Services 11-50 employees	19.4.2016 Via. Email Exchange, 7.5.2016, face-to-face meeting, 60 min.	Field notes	Ready-made questions, updated proposal
4.	Project Manager, 8+ years' experience	Information Technology and Services 10,001+ employees	23.4.2016 Via. Email Exchange	Field notes	Ready-made questions
5.	Business Innovation Consultant, Strategist, Investor 21+ years experience	Management Consulting, CEO,	17.4.2016 Via. Email Exchanges, and on 8.5.2016, Via. Skype meeting, 58 min.	Field notes	Ready-made questions, updated proposal
6.	Machinery Safety Consultant, 4+ years' experience	Industrial Automation, 1900 employees	28.4.2016 Via. Email Exchange	Field notes	Ready-made questions

As seen in Table 2, six managers were approached for proposal building. For data collection 2, the managers were first sent readymade questions via. email messages. All the managers replied to the questions. Two of these six managers were further interviewed for detailed discussion on the proposal. The transcript of data 2 containing replies and meeting points is added in Appendix 2.

In data 2, three readymade questions were sent to middle managers i.e. (a) Present way of working, how they are currently handling continuous change. This part was analysed along with data 1 response in the current state analysis. (b) Desired state, how would they like to handle continuous change based on what they have read, heard or seen other people dealing with the change. (c) Their recommendation based on their knowledge and experience i.e. what they recommend to cope and thrive in an environment of continuous change. The replies of the managers were further analysed for themes buildings. The themes were put in the initial proposal.

After that, the new proposal, named as the updated proposal, is formulated which contained both elements from the conceptual framework and elements from data 2 (managers' replies). This updated proposal is further discussed with the two managers from the table 2. The discussions were one-to-one revolving around the updated thesis. As a result, the updated proposal is further refined with suggested improvements and called as the final proposal. The final proposal is later shown to other managers for validation and feedback.

Table 3 shows the details of data collection for validation and feedback of the proposal.

Table 3. Data collection 3 for proposal validation and feedback.

No	Participant position and experience	Participant industry and its size	Interview date and duration and type	Documented as	Topics discussed
1.	Product developer, 6+ years experience	Computer software industry, 30-50 people	14.5.2016 Via. Skype 50 min	correction and Field notes	Final proposal
2.	Design Team leader, 15+ years' experience	Civil Engineering, 10,001 + employees	14.5.2016 face-to-face meeting, 45 min	correction and suggestions	Final proposal
3.	Country manager, 8+ years' experience	Telecommunications, 201-500 employees	9.5.2016 face-to-face meeting, 60 min.	correction and Field notes	Final proposal
4.	Manager, 5+ years experience	Food processing industry, 200-300 employees	10.5.2016 face-to-face meeting, 25 min.	correction and Field notes	Final proposal

As shown in Table 3, four managers were approached for proposal validation and feedback for data collection 3. Three managers out of four were new managers and one of them was also interviewed in data 1. This was done as unfortunately other managers were not available for face-to-face meeting. The comments were positive about the proposal. However, a few improvements were suggested in some part of the proposal.

The feedback is implemented in the final draft of the proposal. The resultant draft of the proposal is chosen as the final proposal after the implementation of all the suggestions.

2.4 Validity and Reliability Plan

It is important to ensure that the study being conducted is valid and reliable. Study being valid or validity of study means how well the study measures what it is purported to measure (Joppe, 2000). Whereas reliability of the study means that to which degree stable and consistent results are produced which could be repeatable (Joppe, 2000). Reliability alone is not sufficient, both reliability and validity are required for an authentic research or study. This concern to the question, how can a researcher convince the readers about the authenticity of his or her research and that they should pay attention to the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Phelan and Wren (2006) have mentioned a few ways of improving validity and reliability in research. The points are mentioned as (a) clearly defining the objective and goals of the study (b) matching the assessment measure to the goals and objectives (c) asking for feedback from outsiders (d) involving the stakeholders in ideas generation and validation (e) comparing the results with other studies or data. These steps are followed for ensuring the validity and reliability in this study.

In this study, validity is established by clearly defining and operationalizing the objective of the study. Later, it is ensured that the study is consistent with the goals as promised in the introduction of the study. Moreover, validity is ensured through selecting the appropriate and suitable tools for conducting the study. In this way, the expectations of the readers are defined. Study is carried out with the key stakeholders i.e. middle managers. They were involved in the current state analysis, proposal building and validating it. In this way, their engagement and feedback increased the validity of the study.

Reliability in this study is ensured by maintaining consistency in the data collection phase. First, the interviews leading to discussions and informal conversations were conducted by asking open-end questions. The questions were same and were asked in same order to each interviewee. The interviewees associated the questions to their personal and working situation in the company and answered accordingly. Then, the data is understood and analysed against few themes that emerged from the data itself. The information provided in the study can be repeated. The situation in this study particularly demanded to ask the same questions to as many managers as possible so that different and re-enforced opinions are generated about the situation. The proposed proposal is discussed in detail with the middle managers to verify the findings and get feedback. The

summary of the interviews are listed in Appendix 1 and 2 for data 1 and data 2 respectively.

3 Current State Analysis

This section discusses the current situation in which middle managers are working. First, overview of the current state analysis process is presented. Then, the types of continuous changes happening are discussed as reported by the middle managers. Next, the chapter analyzes how these changes are affecting the managers and how they are coping with these changes. The summary and findings are presented in the last section.

3.1 Overview of the Current State Analysis

This section presents the overview of the current state analysis i.e. how the current state analysis is conducted. The goals or targets set for this sections were to identify (a) what kind of different continuous change initiatives happening in the companies or industries, (b) how these continuous change initiatives are affecting the middle managers, (c) how companies are currently dealing with the continuous change, (d) how middle managers are currently dealing with the continuous change.

These goals or targets were achieved by asking open ended readymade questions to the middle managers. The middle managers from different industries with different roles, positions and working experiences were interviewed in face-to-face format. The interview questions included the four above mentioned sections i.e. (a), (b), (c), and (d). Additionally, the questions were generic so that the interviewee can relate his company's or industry's situation with the question. As a result, a diverse set of answers, as can be seen in Appendix 1 and 2, came up that revealed the current state of working of the middle managers.

The replies of the middle managers were treated as equal. The replies were summarized against each question. The replies were analyzed in a way to get different common themes from the data. The themes were named in such a way that each theme is covering all the points mentioned under it. All different themes are placed under the relevant sections of the chapter. Each section in the chapter presents the consolidated different themes that relate to the section. The summary of each section is presented at the end of section. The overall summary of the chapter is presented at the end of the chapter.

3.2   Types of Continuous Change Happening

In the interviewees in data 1, three major themes of continuous changes emerged i.e. (1) global economy based, (2) markets dynamics based, (3) technology based. They are shown in Table 4 along with the related changes and type of changes i.e. major or minor or small in scale. More details for data 1 can be seen in Appendix 1.

Global economy has been not doing well from seven or eight years from now. The recession and slow growth has affected all most all the organizations one way or another especially to the big companies. Global economic situation has affected traditional industries such as oil and energy, machinery and metal, mining, paper and pulp and Electrical and Electronics manufactures. Due to exports orientated companies, global economy has hit these industries badly.

Global economy based changes are causing changes inside the company and industry. Company behave differently in bad times, more concerned about the internal process fine tuning and improvements. Companies are now getting less and less orders than before. As a result, other major changes are triggered within the organization such as layoff of the staff and organizational changes for example, improving working models as the competition has increased, and restructuring the operations e.g., by building centralized service centres, Changes in purchasing, IT and HR are also resulting from restructuring.

Markets dynamics are continuously evolving thus companies have to adapt to these changes. Markets dynamics changes were mentioned, for example, as

> *"Competitors' esp. Asian competitors, are doing fine in Western market".*
>
> *(Informant 5, appendix 1, p. 1(11))*

Organizations are restructuring their pricing, processes, products and strategies because of this to attract and respond efficiently to customer's needs. Customers' needs and demands are changing continuously which are shaping company's offerings. People are switching jobs at faster pace and thus companies have to tackle this situation by better resource planning and competence management. Companies are continuously trying out different things for survival by creating value in their offerings. For example, pricing experimentations are continuously done. Re-structuring and merger and acquisition (M&A) causing the organization to opt for outsourced IT services. Companies are responding to all these changes in their own ways.

Table 4. Continuous change initiatives as reported in Data 1.

Continuous change initiatives	Industries	Related changes	Type of change
Global economy based	Oil and Energy industry, Machinery, mining, paper and pulp, Electrical/Electronics Manufacturing etc.	(a) Less business than before-layoffs (b) Organizational changes Restructuring, Finding better models	Major
Markets dynamics based	Electrical/Electronics Manufacturing, Oil and Energy, Information's technology and services, Computer software industry,	(a) competitors doing better (b)Products innovation, Pricing, strategies changing (c)Customers demand and need's changing (d)People switching jobs (e)Outsourcing of IT (f)Trying out different things for survival	Major
Technology based	Electrical/Electronics Manufacturing, Information's technology and services, Computer software industry, Leisure, Travel and Tourism	(a) IT infrastructure developments (b) Rapid transformation of technology (c) New laws and regulation regarding environment	Medium

Technology is continuously evolving and bringing continuous changes in the organizations and in their businesses. In some organizations, changes are happening due to rapid transformation of technology, new laws and regulations regarding environment and emission. Organizations are developing IT infrastructures to create value for their customers. Moreover, the products themselves are improving through inventions and innovations by trying new solutions to correspond with the market needs. These technological changes are affecting largely to small sized organizations because of big global players of the industry involvement in their business.

The type of changes reported as major are in oil and energy, in traditional industries such as machinery, mining, paper and pulp, electrical/electronics manufacturing, IT service management etc. largely due to global economic crisis. The medium changes were reported in Labour market; unemployment (layoffs), people switching jobs, Technological based changes in Electrical/Electronics Manufacturing, Information's technology and services, Computer software industry, Leisure, Travel and Tourism industries and Me-

chanical and Industrial engineering. Small changes reported as small tweaks in organizational process, continuous improvement program happening locally in the organizations.

Such continuous changes are happening across the companies as reported by all the interviewees in data 1. As the economic situation is not good so all the competitors are facing the same situation i.e. they are fighting for the same customers as whole market is shrinking down. So companies are always improving their internal issues and processes to be competitive enough.

Changes are *continuous* and they will be happening all the time, as felt by all the interviewees. Technology is developing all the time and companies subject to this becomes stress and they reshape their offerings and practices e.g., IT systems and sale process. Overcapacity in terms of labour is in most of the organizations especially in big organizations. The traditional industries such as mining and oil industry are suffering more. There are few industries that are doing well in these situations, as reported by the interviewees, such as energy and Electronics sector as the demand is growing and the business are stable and profitable. In general, Industries have become short sighted due to economic conditions and are not looking too far in the future.

Continuous changes happening are not short term, rather they will keep on happening in future as well in an ever increasing speed. Companies have to adapt to this situation. Customers buying habits have changed than before. Organizations could be affected by other stakeholders such as competitors. Government agency pushing for re-structuring and continuous improvements. Organization need to have continuous change management strategy because that would be helpful for them to not only successfully cope but also thrive in these difficult times.

3.3   How Companies Deals with Continuous Change

The majority of the interviewees in data 1 reported that their respective companies either do not have continuous change management strategy or they are not aware of it, i.e. it is not in their knowledge. Only one interviewee out of ten interviewees in data 1 reported that in his company HR department makes the continuous change management strategy for the company. Another manager mentioned that his company has started building strategy after the change has happened. While in small software companies, continuous

change of people switching job is coped with hiring short term employees by the recruiting firm. The absence of continuous change management strategy is compensated by the one change management strategy. The strengths and weaknesses of the one change management strategy is mentioned as follows.

The reported strengths of the change management initiatives by the companies in the case of one change management are: (a) companies are open to change, (b) companies have courage to take initiatives to introduce change in the previously stable company lacking change culture, (c) companies always want to develop their ways of working trying to improve the processes, (c) companies are keen to gain the required competences by assessment of the situation and building the competences. These strengths show that the companies are keen to improve their processes and are willing to change to cope with the situation. There are some weaknesses as well as reported by the interviewees.

The reported weakness of the companies regarding change initiatives in the case of one change management are: (a) not early inclusion of people in the change initiatives, (b) not enough help is provided by top management regarding change especially, reliable information at early stages of change, (c) poor communication and information sharing i.e. rough way of sharing information by company- when and what to share is missing, (d) poor follow-up of the implementations to change, (e) change is implemented in a way that it is benefiting company or bosses only and not to employee, (f) there is no routine of change in the company i.e. change culture is missing, and, (g) management or people resistance. This shows that there is difficult situation for the middle managers to operate in this situation. Middle managers are facing the consequences of the above mentioned situation. Interaction of middle managers and the company is crucial for both of them.

Middle managers inclusion in change management strategy, design and implementation was probed. The majority of the interviewees replied in negation saying that they are not included. Only few reported that yes, middle managers are included in the strategy design and implementation of the change management by the company. Middle managers facing changes need company support amidst of change.

In the interviews, one question related to how companies deal with the middle managers facing change; whether company provide help or not, and does company show its awareness of their suffering or not. The managers replied that yes, their company seems to be aware of their situation. However, majority replied that company does not provide enough

help amid change to managers. Managers in big organizations replied that help is provided in case of big changes e.g., company offers trainings about change management, and, there are consultants hired by the company to get help from. In another big company, the manager mentioned that help is provided by the appointed supporting teams that offer help but the issue reported was that the teams themselves were overloaded. Few managers replied that middle managers provide help, however, getting help from immediate bosses depends on mutual relationship.

In summary, it is found that the companies do not have any specific continuous change management strategy or the middle managers are not aware about their respective companies' continuous change management strategy. There are some strengths and weakness reported about the companies regarding one change management initiatives. The strengths are found are companies openness and courage of the companies to bring change, companies willingness to improve their process by acquiring new competences. The weaknesses include that the employees are not include in the early stages of change, not enough help is provided and information regarding change and its implementation is poor in some of the companies. This is the situation of the companies in which middle managers are operating. Middle managers are facing a lot of challenges due to this situation.

3.4   How Managers Deals with Continuous Change

This section explains how middle managers are currently dealing with continuous changes based on the answers of the interviewees in data 1. It is found that, continuous change is affecting middle managers in several ways and middle managers seem worried about the situation. Largely, it is reported that middle managers do not have personal strategy for continuous change management or, they have not thought about having such strategy. However, they are keen to have such strategy so that they can thrive in the face of continuous change.

The following sections, 3.3.1 and 3.3.2, describe the way continuous change is affecting middle managers and how currently middle managers are coping with continuous change.

3.4.1   Challenges Posed by Continuous Change

Continuous change is affecting middle managers in many ways. The following five themes emerged by data 1 analysis. These themes show the main challenges continuous change is posing to middle managers. The themes are mentioned as follows:

(a) Working in uncertainty
Middle managers are feeling uncertain about the changes happening in their respective companies. This situation is affecting them mentally as they are less clear about the situation. This uncertainty is forcing them to plan and investigate beforehand the change. In case of work moving to other centre, as reported by one interviewee, they feel of losing jobs in future. In the uncertain situation work spirit is affected as they do not know what is exactly happening in future. As a result of uncertainty, some managers reported that their job descriptions are changing continuously because there are more people for work in the company.

(b) Forcing to be innovative and adaptive
Continuous change is forcing middle managers to be more innovative and adaptive. One of the interviewee related the situation as, "As long as the changes are not too sudden and radical, managers seem to adapt to changes rather well" (Informant 1, Appendix 1, p. 2(11)), however, adapting to IT systems seem difficult to some middle managers.

Three interviewee out of ten in data 1 reported that asking for quick adaptability and giving less time to adapt (strict timetable to adapt) cause stress as sometime it is not possible to adapt quickly. He further clarified the situation in his company regarding this challenge as

> *"Some department adapts to changes some even took 18 months. This tells about resistance of change in those departments".*
>
> *(Informant 7, Appendix 1, p. 3(11))*

This shows the issue of quick adapting to changes. In general for small companies, there are more opportunities due to the current bad situation of large companies. The situation opens more doors for small companies as customers are looking for cheaper solutions to their problems.

(c) Need for personal competences

Continuous change is demanding middle manager to have personal competences. Currently middle managers are facing the situation in which they are supposed to be up-to-date with the change to see what is going on and where the situation is heading to. This situation forces them to process the information and assess the situation whether there is something for the company to benefits from the situation. For small companies, it is important because they have to create new technology out of the available options. Also, this offers managers opportunity to continuously access their existing competences what they have and what they should acquire.

In small companies, for example, in software industry, when a person leaves or switch job, someone else has to do his or her extra work, the situation become stressful for some time even for whole team especially if the person who has left the job was a product developer. Interviewee in the company reported that

"Family life is affected when extra work has to be done".

(Informant 10, appendix 1, p. 8 (11))

Some managers have reported about internal resistance in their company. Sometimes, the resistance is factual and some time it is just made up, as one of the respondent replied. Mangers have to convince superiors as they ask for proof of manager's judgements. They want to know first that the idea is working and then they will allow. In this situation, managers have to demonstrate their effective communications and show convincing powers and confidence to express their ideas.

Middle managers have to be aware of the business outside their company. The situation of customers (clients) affects the company and the company have to be aware of the situation, understand the customers as what they are speaking at the moment.

(d) Working in poor communication and information flow

Managers, especially, in small organizations, reported about the lack of trust between the employee and the employer. Lack of open and friendly environment cause challenges. In big companies, as reported by the interviewee, organizational changes raise the process questions: to which department, manager need to contact and who is the responsible person? Who has the ownership of the product? Another issue reported is the IT solutions impact: for example, how practical it is to use the system or how easy it is? Also, there are often no clearly nominated persons in some organizations, as reported

by one interviewee in a bid company, where mangers could go and discuss with them about the situation.

In case of big companies, in major changes within the company, directions are well communicated so, it is relatively easy. However, in case of medium and small changes, the communication is not conveyed clearly. In medium and small changes, as reported by one of the interviewee, the management become hostile causing stress. It is reported that there is no straightforward process flow of information in the companies about the change which cause stress. In some companies, as reported, Information is scattered and not updated and not dealing with the change. The situation is causing frustration.

In summary, four elements of continuous change that are affecting the middle managers were identified, which are: working in uncertainty, forcing to be innovative and adaptive, need for personal competences and working in poor communication and information flow. Due to uncertainty middle managers are getting stress because of fear of losing job which results in less work spirit. The continuous change forcing them to be more innovative and adaptive to the situation. There is a demand of getting more personal competences including understanding the change by assessing the situation, processing the information for the betterment of the company, working for extra time, keeping the cool head, and facing the resistance inside the company. Middle managers have to work in the environment of poor communication and information flow where the roles of the designed people may not be clearly mentioned to get help from.

Middle managers have to cope with these situations by effective working. This demands to be having some clear strategy or protocols of working at the manager's end.

3.4.2   Current Practices to Cope Continuous Change

Middle managers were asked for their personal strategy about the continuous change management and how currently they are coping with the continuous change. The answer to this question was that largely, there has been no personal strategy by the middle managers to cope with the continuous change. In data 1, almost all the interviewees (eight out of ten interviewees), replied that they do not have or have not thought about a personal strategy to cope continuous change. However, they were of the opinion that it is important to have (or, create) a personal strategy for continuous change in order to avoid or minimize continuous change side effects. In data 1, the two managers mentioned the following points as their strategy. In data 2, it was also asked to mention the

current practices of coping with continuous change. The interviewees in data 1 and data 2 mentioned the following key elements in coping with continuous change.

(a) Reactive mindset to change

A consultant of innovation management has mentioned (Appendix 1) that most of his client companies don not proactively deal with continuous change. The mindset and culture is reactive to the changes. Innovation is taken as a 'play time' activity with no perceiver urgency. Most of the client companies' focus is more on operational issues with small improvements on the existing offerings rather on innovation and creativity.

(b) Try to understand and adapt change

Middle managers seemed curious about the changes and they seek to know more about the origins and how that changes are going to affect them. They use the following options as reported by the middle manager to understand the change. One of the managers said that the following is of vital importance:

> *"Trying to know what is going on, being bold and trust ourselves that we will be able to do this…"*
>
> (Informant 2, appendix 1, p. 4(11)).

Another manager said that

> *"I try to do be involved in the situation from start (boss try to involve and inform as soon as possible) and I tells to others about what is coming in aloud even on my own risks -bit more rather than bit less".*
>
> (Informant 5, appendix 1, p. 4(11))

Yet another manger noticed that

> *"I just try to adapt as easy as possible. If it is coming from up then I can do very little about it. Accept it and try to practice new process, software etc. as smoothly as possible to support my work".*
>
> (Informant 6, appendix 1, p. 4(11))

Another manager said

> *"I would say that for me the current method for handling the continuous change is mostly by trying to manage with it".*
>
> (Informant 2, appendix 2, p. 1(4))

He further said that

> *"I typically try to allow some time to digest the information and form a systemic view in order to understand what is behind the change, where could it lead to and how to get there".*
>
> *(Informant 2, appendix 2, p. 1(4))*

These examples demonstrate that some of the middle managers try to understand the change and adapt to it.

(c) Correct Attitude

Two out of fifteen managers mentioned that they check their attitude or thoughts about the changes. One of the managers mentioned that

> *"I foster an attitude that is more like prepared to facing the next upcoming change rather than being surprised when it occurs"*
>
> *(Informant 3, appendix 2, p.2 (4))*

He further mentioned that he do not consider the current state as permanent status. Another manager mentioned that he checks his first thoughts about the change. He has mentioned that

> *"I have noticed that regarding the first impressions our thoughts are often biased".*
>
> *(Informant 2, appendix 2, p.1 (4))*

(d) Communication

Some of the mangers emphasised the importance of having excellent communication to tell about the change. One of the managers has mentioned that regardless of how his bosses are annoyed, he always ask and gather information. He further mentioned that to reduce error margin, it is necessary to ask instead of jumping into the conclusion about the change. Another manager mentioned that, as change is creating uncertainty i.e. a situation about which we don't know much, so, he try to be honest and tell others that this and this is going to happen, trying to smoothen the situation.

(e) Efficient working

Some of the middle managers are employing efficient working to cope with the change. One of the managers has mentioned that he tackle continuous change by doing homework and actively studying new technological changes happening in his domain. Another

manager has mentioned that clearly assigning roles and responsibilities to the personnel and the following on weekly basis is helping him in handling change.

One of interviewee mentioned that his personal strategy to cope continuous change is by having a clear understanding of long term strategy because it gives focus and helps making day-to-day (tactical) choices and adjustments that lead in the right direction. As without a clear picture of where things are going, continuous change degrades into a reactive firefighting mode that in the long term leads no-where. Another manager has mentioned that hunting the root cause of things rather patching the symptoms has worked so far for him to fix the issues. Maintaining a prioritized to-do list of personal things allows putting the changes into perspective with regards to personal responsibilities.

In summary, it is found that middle managers largely do not have any specific strategy to cope with the continuous change or, they have not thought about that. However, they view having such strategy as important. The normal ways of coping, as reported by some of the managers, are as follows: (a) reactive mindset to change, (b) trying to understand and adapt change, (c) adopting correct attitude to change, (d) communication and effective working. These current ways could be good but they are not prevalent among all the managers, as seen in data 1. Therefore, the need for improvement and personal strategy remain valid. The following section summaries the key finding from the chapter.

3.5   Key Findings from the Current State Analysis (Data Collection 1)

It is observed that there are three major continuous changes happening i.e. global economy based, market dynamics based and technology based. Middle managers reported that these changes are affecting them in one way or another as the companies behaving differently than the stable times in past. Companies, as reported in data 1, do not have continuous change management strategy. Only one respondent said that in his company, HR department make continuous change management strategy.

Table 5 shows the summary of the strategies how companies are dealing with continuous change (currently).

Table 5. Summary of companies dealing with continuous change (currently).

Strategy: Mostly **no continuous** change management strategy by the companies or Middle Managers does not know about it.	
Strengths (in one change initiative)	Weaknesses (in one change initiative)
• Open to change • Courage to initiate change • willingness to improve the processes • Required competences assessment and building	• Not early inclusion of people • Not enough help offered • poor communication and information sharing • poor follow-up of implementations

Table 5 list the summary of how currently companies are dealing with continuous change. Companies are found courageous in taking initiatives. Companies are keen to develop new processes resulting in more organizational changes. Companies are influenced by the increased competition so that's why companies are eagerly watch the situation. They are continuously assessing their present competences and are building new competences which are required for the survival in the competitive world. However, in the case of one change initiative, the companies are found open to change.

As shown above in Table 5, Weaknesses, as reported in data 1, middle managers are not included in change initiative at early stages. This creates uncertainty in their minds about the change. It is reported that usually enough help is not provided by the company in the change initiatives to the managers. It is reported in data 1 that companies channel of communication in change initiatives are poor. The information sharing is not effective. It is also reported that the companies are not good in follow-up of change implementation.

This is the usual scenario of the companies where managers are working in i.e. continuous changes are happening and there is less help and poor information flow regarding the change initiatives. In order to know how middle managers are coping with the situation, it is necessary to know the challenges (effects) of continuous change for them. Majority of the Middle managers in data 1 have reported that they are facing a situation of uncertainty in the face of continuous change. Uncertainty is affecting them mentally. They have a feeling of threat of losing job. This situation of uncertainty affects their work spirit as reported by one of the mangers. They are forced to be innovative and adaptive

to this situation. IT projects and strict time tables to adapt to changes seem difficult and cause stress.

Table 6 list the summary of the challenges and the current practices of coping by middle managers with the change.

Table 6. Summary of managers' challenges and practices when dealing with continuous change (currently).

Strategies: Largely no personal strategies (W1)	
Challenges	The current practices of coping (by few)
• working in uncertainty (stress, and/or fear of losing job) • To be innovative and adaptive (strict timetable to adapt) • Need for personal competences • Working in poor communication and information flow	• Reactive mindset to change • Try to understand and adapt change • Correct Attitude (2/15) (checking thoughts, prepared mind for change) • Communication • Efficient working

Table 6 starts with the challenges for copying with continuous change. It is reported by middle managers that communication and information flow regarding change is poor in their respective companies. So, they have to work in this kind of *uncertainty*. *Poor communication and information flow* raise process flow questions as well as who is the owner of the process are not known to the managers. These challenges demand for personal strategy to cope with the continuous change. In data 1, the current practices of coping with the change by middle managers were also probed.

Continuous change situation is asking for improved personal development from the middle managers. Major personal development demands from the middle managers include as continuously assessing and improving their existing competences, having capability of extra working e.g., in case of some colleague switch or leave job, maintaining a cool head, to build a trustworthy relationship with bosses (especially immediate bosses) for convincing them for idea approval, and, need to know customers and their changing demands.

In data 1, it is found that largely middle managers do not have their own personal strategy to cope with the continuous change. They seem to be interested in having a personal strategy to minimize the way continuous change affect them. This becomes the main weakness for this study along with the challenges reported in the above table. This study suggest guidelines to middle managers to not only cope but also thrive in the face of continuous change. It is served as personal strategy for continuous change situation.

However, there are some good practices found in data 1 from a few middle managers that can be seen in Table 6. Some of the middle managers reported their way of dealing with the continuous change. Their approach is mentioned in detail in the above chapter. The summary of the ways currently managers are coping with the change are as follows. Middle managers are found as (a) the mindset of the managers is reactive mainly due to the prevailing culture in the companies as reported by one of the consultant to the companies, (b) they try to understand and adapt change, i.e. managers try to know about the change as much as possible by getting information and remaining up to date about the change; (c) Correct attitude, two out of fifteen managers reported that they check their attitude towards change. They prefer prepared attitude and try to shun the biased attitude towards change; (d) Communication, managers actively communicate regarding change with their peers and bosses in order to reduce the uncertainty; (e) Efficient working, as middle managers have mentioned multiple ways of efficient working that are supportive in continuous change. Examples of the reported efficient workings include doing homework, doing technical development at fast face, transparency, effective working through communication, delegation and personal task managements.

The current state analyses reveal that there is a dire need for personal strategy for middle managers as the current ways of dealing with the change are not prevalent among middle managers and also not enough. The personal strategy not only equip them to successful survive or cope the continuous change situation but also it help them to thrive, which is desired response amid continuous change. The literature review look into this by providing best practice for thriving in the time of continuous change for middle managers.

4 Best Practice and Conceptual Framework for Thriving in Continuous Change

In order to address the challenge identified in chapter 3, the focus of this chapter is on finding the best practice in literature for middle managers in continuous change. This section starts with introduction to change management, basics of change management and continuous change management. Thereafter, the chapter focuses on the best practice found in the literature for middle manager to not only successfully cope but also thrive in dealing with continuous change. Based on the best practice, a conceptual framework is developed and presented at the end of the chapter.

4.1 Introduction to Change Management

Change can be perceived as an opportunity or threat (Sarah, 2009). The reaction to change depends on individuals or organizations from non-coping, coping or surviving and thriving (Walinga and Rowe, 2013). Change can be originated due to several reasons both internal and external to organizations. Change management is a process of taking actions to overcome the change. The actions should be well planned and structural. Actions may include changing the behaviors of organization and individuals as per the requirements of the change.

There are two most famous change management theories for organizations i.e. emergent and planned changes (Burnes, 2004). Emergent change is of continuous nature and cannot be managed in a linear fashion (Burnes, 2009). It asks for actions and is affected by actions. Whereas, planned change assume stability of environment where desired state is achieved through strategy formation, implementation and then through outcome assuming no or little disruption from inside or outside factors (Burnes, 2009). What makes the change successful depends on two things, which most appropriate approach is chosen for the nature of change and under what circumstances it is executed (Burnes, 2009).

There are several change management models such as Lewin's unfreeze, change, refreeze model (Lewin, 1951), Kotter's 8-step model (Kotter, 1998), and others. All the models have specific pros and cons. There is no ideal model suitable for all the situations. Therefore, leadership should choose different approaches for different nature of change rather opting for one approach to all the situations (Burnes, 2009). The important

is the applicability and relevance of the approach to the circumstances of the organization. Besides, achieving the desired milestones for the organization, change management project should also ensure employees capabilities of working efficiently in new situations.

4.1.1 Basics of Change Management

The basic underlying aim of all the change management approaches is to bring in-line the behaviors and capabilities of the employees with the change securing buy-in for the organization. It happens since the success in organizations regarding change management depends on convincing large number of employees to change their mindsets and work differently than they do currently. People can adapt to this kind of switch only when they are willing to think differently about their ways of work. The employee's ability to adapt to change is affected if they do not understand change or resist it. Therefore, it is a daunting task for the leaders and managers to persuade the employees to change their mindsets.

MaKinsey (2003) has mentioned four conditions of changing mindsets of the employees. Employees change their mindsets when (a) they accept the point of the change and agree with it, (b) there is a reinforcement system (i.e. rewards and recognition system) in line with the new desired behaviors of the employees, (c) the employee possess the desired skills, (d) there are role models practicing the change by themselves. These four conditions are independent though, as together they can serve as good source to change the mindsets of the employees. Change in mindsets of employees require fundamental changes in culture of the company for example "from being reactive to proactive, hierarchical to collegial, or introspective to externally focus" (MaKinsey & Company, 2003, p. 2).

Organizations change is of primary importance and can facilitate the employees to change. Besides, change in mindsets, it is important to consider what other change initiatives are taking place in the organization (Bernard & Stoll, 2010). It is important to know because it will tell whether the change will be seen as positive or as a burden. The continuous changes may induce the feelings of overwhelmed by the employees. Therefore, companies should seek continuous change management strategy.

4.1.2   Continuous Change Management

Continuous change is a change that is continual, relentless and beyond the traditional punctuated equilibrium view of stability (Brown & Eisenhardt, 1997). Brown and Eisenhardt (1997) have researched about the firm's engagement in continuous change and they have mentioned that the change is continuous and endemic to the firms. The punctuated equilibrium model does not hold for continuous change which says that the change occurs during the times of stability and this change is quite radical that reshapes the industry. The changes according to this model are rare and risky. Brown and Eisenhardt (1997) have mentioned that the firms compete in managing the change, where successful firms have a culture and ability to continuously modify their business models and offerings. By successfully coping with the continuous change, firms get competitive advantage over other competitors, survive and prosper (Porras & Silvers, 1991)

The continuous change require new skills as previously working skills do not work anymore. The assumption about the skills before was that, the skills are for all time and for all circumstances, enough to tackle the situations to come in future. Hence, when a person has gained those skills, it was smooth sailing for him/her for the future times. However, with the fast and continuous pace of change the situation demanding change of mindset in this regard so that individuals can become effective in the changing and challenging world.

Likewise, managing 'human' factor of organizational change is still a tough task for the managements and leadership. Organizations have found the solutions of incremental and occasional changes even that are larger changes. However, still the continuous, simultaneously occurring and accelerating transformations are cause of worries for many organizations. Therefore, managing the workforce amid continuous, overlapping and fast transformational changes is quite challenging.

The successful management amid such changes requires applying skills already learned in past for one particular planned change e.g., effective communication and leadership plus others that have not learned in the past. The new skills and mindset change for managing continuous change are required as well. The mindset change from **a change** to **a constant state of change** cause worries to the way managers and leaders think. It may also result in resistance and defending the old mindset.

The pace of change is fast and it seems that the same pace will be happening in future as well, so, this situation cannot be avoided. This demand for mindset shift and acquisition of new skills. Therefore, organizations and managers should learn the techniques to manage continuous change.

4.1.3 Techniques to Manage Continuous Change by Organizations

Carol Kinsey (2011) has suggested some techniques to manage workforce in the face of continuous change in organizations. The elements of his findings are presented as follows.

a) Accepting the Fact that Resistance is Inevitable and Natural

In human's neurological system, change processing part is attached to fear and apprehensions part that results in resistance. Human brain is designed to react to the psychological pains and surprises. The reactions to such agents are depression, stress and anxiety etc. It is important for the leadership to understand the possible psychological responses of the change. However, it is very tricky to know in the times of continuous and simultaneous change as the people are exposed to so many different transitions at the same time that result in emotional changes in the people.

b) Disseminate Collective Purpose

Leadership role in continuous change is crucial as they can help them embrace the instability and can guide them in the time of uncertainty. A leader can show them what the organization is hoping to achieve and what expected benefits the organization could get by the changes. The stability is achieved by emphasizing the company's place and worth and promoting the common hood among the employees.

c) Change the Mentality of Employees Towards Change

Realize the employees that the change is constant. The process is not going to stop after one particular change. A constant change adjustment mentality is needed to be induced and encouraged among the employees. So that they are ready for new change once the company is adjusted to one particular change.

d) Access to Information and Knowledge

Create transparency in all processes by sharing information and data. This is quite meaningful step as it shows the intents of the company to include, listen and share the important information with the employee. This encourage engagement and promote conversation.

e) Intermingling of Employees

A culture of inter-mingling of employees is crucial for effective change management because of relationships and collaboration that are developed among the employees. People relationships should be encouraged to be built on mutual respect and trust. The leadership should nurture these rewarding relationships because they prepare the employees for the change readiness.

f) Change leadership style of Controlling

The leadership has to change the leadership style instead of dictating the change, it should be co-created with all the stakeholders. Leadership showing flexibility in practicing their mandates will bring the talents and skills of the employees to the surface. They will feel empowered and change initiatives will become easy for the organizations. The communication with all levels of employees should be established. In this way, all of the employees realize the current state of the business, original factors behind the change and how their actions could affect the change initiatives. Engaging in one-on-one communication is very beneficial. Leadership can ask small questions about the wellbeing of the employee, their progress, complaints, and overall knowing them on personal level. This way a friendly and productive environment is created and employees could get the chance to get inspired by their leaders.

This is the part of organizations in which they can provide a facilitating environment in which middle managers successfully cope the continuous change. Besides this managers themselves can engage in life long personal development journey for their own benefits in personal and working life. The aim of such journey would be to excel on their own without depending on the organizational facilitative processes. The following section provides few best practice in literature for middle managers for thriving in continuous change situations.

4.2 Best Practice for Thriving for Middle Managers

This section presents the best practice in literature that could be helpful for middle managers for thriving in the time of continuous change.

Middle manager is any person between line managers and top management. Middle managers serve as bridge between the two layers primarily responsible for strategy and policies implementation from top management and supervise other employees under them. The roles of the middle managers have become crucial especially in today's dynamic and complex working environment for organizations. Figure 1 lists the tasks middle managers perform in an organization. The middle manager can influence strategist, interpret and disseminate the information, implement strategy, and can act as facilitator to idea generation among co-workers. Middle managers are less served entity in organizational change initiatives. They can thrive in different managerial challenges which are present both inside and outside of the organizations, when empowered with right skills and mindsets.
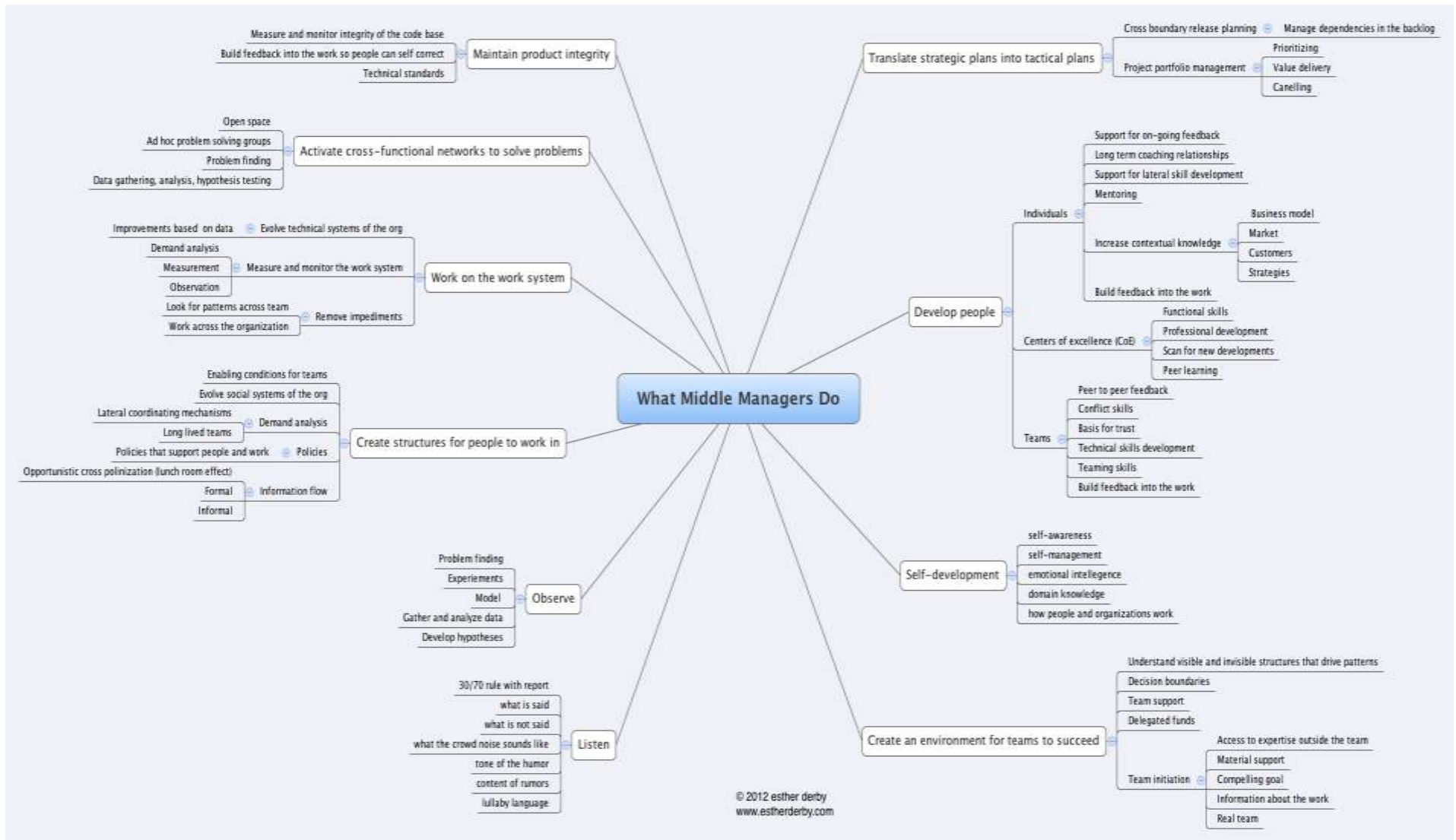
Figure 1. The task performed by middle manager.

4.2.1 Managerial Challenges in Today's Dynamic World

Management theories once able to answer the questions of management revolution are unable to answer today's new and emerging organizations (Walsh et al., 2006). Today's dynamic* world pose many managerial challenges, which are occurring at the same time, and therefore, making management and leadership difficult. Due to dynamic nature, problems are unstructured where definition of problems and solutions changes, new players enters, powers and possibilities of working among players changes. There is no absolute right solution to the problems. Managers can't manage the situation by using their expertise and vision only because managers have to act in a network kind of inter-dependent structure where multiple players with the same position have conflicting opinions. The command and control is not working in networks. Therefore, managers have to learn new skills and mindsets suitable for dynamic or continuous changes.

Likewise, continuous change has implications on leadership as success of firm is determined by changing the organizational structure and processes fostering innovation. Tsoukas and Chia (2012) has mentioned that, the change in organizations from within is best seen by observing the response of people in the organization to new situations and experiences and how managers are involved and influence organizational matters (Tsoukas & Chia, 2012). However, the human side of change poses challenge by not liking or agreeing to when change is implemented or announced as completed. Change may effect on the emotional side of the people so it is necessary to include people by listening to them, giving attention and training.

These challenges are cause of worry for organizations and at the same time for individuals e.g., middle managers. These challenges demand from individual acquisition of new skills and mindsets. The individual should see the situation as an opportunity of learning and growth despite all the challenges, which is called a thriving response.

Dynamic word has meaning "Characterized or distinguished by continuous change or vigorous activity, high effectiveness, energy, or force" as mentioned in business dictionary (Dynamic, p. 1)

4.2.2   Thriving

Thriving definition, as found in the work of Carver (1998), is "a high engagement, learn-
ing, and growth in environments of high work-related stress" (Walinga & Rowe, 2013, p.
69). Carver has further mentioned, "Thriving (physical or psychological) may reflect de-
creased reactivity to subsequent stressors, faster recovery from subsequent stressors,
or a consistently level of functioning" (Carver, 1998, p. 245). Walinga and Rowe (2013)
have mentioned three kinds of responses in their research on work-related stress trans-
formation as (a) Non-coping, (b) coping and (c) thriving. ''Non-coping response showed
despair, negativity or hopelessness. Coping response showed acceptance of the situa-
tion as it was and trying to manage that with the best of the skills. Whereas, thriving
response showed about perception of the situation as opportunity for learning, benefit
and growth. Thriving individual were not physically affected with the stress as compared
to non-coping and coping individuals (Walinga & Rowe, 2013).

Walinga and Rowe (2013) have mentioned that thriving individual's outcomes and adap-
tive response strategies were (a) Thriving individuals possessed more energy than indi-
viduals having other two responses. (b) self-transformative; they were more tolerant (c)
stress transformative (d) they reframed the events making meanings (e) they were ben-
eficial to many and causing no damage to others (f) inclusive and relational with others
(g) their problem solving strategies were collaborative and systemic actions; focusses on
others not to self only (h) social support for the purpose of continuous learning and guid-
ance (i) organizational factors as becoming empowered and exploring innovative solu-
tions collaboratively. Such responses are highly desired in the face of continuous change
because they enable middle manager to perform to the maximum of their potential while
least affected with the stress and other emotional agents.

As mentioned above that the collaborative and inclusive working is the response of thriv-
ing individuals, therefore, it is desired that middle manager possess this mindset. The
following section clarify what collaborative and inclusive mindset, called process mind-
set, is and how it is different from project management mindset.

4.2.3 Project-Management Mindset vs. Process-Management Mindset

There are two management mindsets i.e. project and process mindsets as mentioned by (De Mooij, 2013). Project management mindset is often used for solving complex problems as widely practised by middle managers with technical degree. The approach employed is that they break the complex tasks into small manageable tasks. The problem solving requires analytical skills. The other factors include precise problem definition, clearly defining goals, gathering relevant information to problem definition. This finally leads to one right solution.

However, as, mentioned earlier that current world is dynamic, complex and interconnected therefore managers also required to have skills of thinking management as a process of ordering interests of stakeholder and being flexible and adaptive. The process management mindset is suitable for the dynamic and challenging world. In process management mindset, problem definition is loosely or broadly defined as there is no one right definition of problem exist because different stakeholders holds different views on definition of problem. The broad definition of problem encourages the stakeholders to cooperate or show willingness to work together.

Objectives in project mindset are defined clearly as they set direction. The drawback of defining clear objectives especially in an interconnected world results in inability of adaptation to changing environment. Mangers lack resilience when unexpected change happens during the course of project. Teams with project mindset with defined goals are not going to learn anything as they are highly focused to achieve their goals. As a result, they may miss the unexpected attractive opportunity that may emerge during the course of project. Process mindset favors in-explicit goals so they could also not be blocked by the opponents.

The way of gathering the information is also different in project and process mindsets. In project mindset only relevant information is gathered and other information that is not relevant in achieving the projects goals is considered overloaded and discarded. Whereas in process mindset, every information that tells about the stakeholders is considered important and there is no unnecessary information.

In process management mindset, important task is to involve all the stakeholder so that they see the problem as their own problem. It can be achieved by making the process attractive to them so that they feel that there is something for them as well. The joint

working and analysis of the available information eliminate the uncertainties of the process.

Decision making in process management is not clear-cut process rather it is continuous process. The decision comes up itself. Whereas in project management mindset, the decision is made after solution is found by going through the analysis of problems, goal setting, information collection and reaching to solution.

What makes a leader successful is also different in both project management and process management mindsets. In project management mindset, success is tied with the achieving goals in time and in the budgets. Whereas, the process mindset, talks about the satisfaction of what is achieved, what new thing is learned during the process, what relationships emerged among the stakeholders and is trust established among stakeholders or not. The achieved goal could be different than the initially assumed one so, the question of achieving the goal is not present but whether you are satisfied or not is important. The learning should come as a result of collaboration. The establishment of trust and good relationships are important because with the same people you might have to work again because of interdependence and interconnectedness nature of world.

Process management mindset is good for dynamic and continuous change. However, it requires resilience mindset as stakeholders with conflicting interests are involved in the process. Resilience is desired attribute of managers in the challenges situation of dynamic working environments. The following section explains in detail resilience mindset and its relevancy.

4.2.4   Resilience Mindset for Continuous Change Management

Resilience is the mindset suitable for continuous change management (Hoey, 2014) because it provides strengths and fortitude in the face of continuous change. The moving forward and accomplishing goals become easier with resilience mindset.

(a) Why Resilience is Suitable for Continuous Change

Kurt Lewin in 1947 has presented change model of, unfreeze –change- refreeze, (Lewin, 1951) which explains the change process by comparing with the ice block. Like, Ice block is first transformed into molten state (unfreeze) then molded into the desired shape

(change) and finally into solid state (re-freeze). The three stage model when implemented is associated with the effects on human. The unfreeze stage is like losing something, change stage bring uncertainty and re-freeze stage is about future and new ways of developments. As, now change is happening continuously so, these three stages repeating very quickly. Therefore, the refreeze stage is not achieved and the only constant is change itself happening constantly.

The approach that the change will be completed or it will stop as the project is completed is flawed one because with the completion (management) of one change some 'new' change will emerge. Therefore, continuous change management model is needed to keep on repeating this approach believing that the green signal of change management (Re-freeze stage) is never achieved. This situation demands the change of mind set towards change itself and towards change management. Resilience mindset is highly desirable for managing continuous change.

The resilience mindset is important because the way adversity and stress is viewed greatly affect our success and overall life. Failure is inevitable fact in life as some day or other people have to experience failure. The reaction to failure could be to spend a shattered life or re-emerge from failures to move on to bigger and better things. Centre of creative leadership has mentioned that "Lack of resilience is signaled by burnout, fatigue, malaise, depression, defensiveness and cynicism" (center of creative leadership, p. 1). Resilience give power to conquer the setbacks.

(b) What is Resilience

Resilience at working place is defined by The A&DC group as "An individual's capacity to adapt positively to pressure, setbacks, challenges and change in order to achieve peak performance" (The A&DC group, 2011, p.1). Resilience is about correct adaptation to the events rather than just being strong and firm. This makes the managers agile so that they can change their track and adapt to the problems and setbacks faced on daily basis at workplace. Resilience is about maintaining the **true original state** of one in the face of adversities that try to influence the individual. So, it is more of the individual characteristic rather than the organizational one.

Resilience is an ongoing process. Resilience can be gained by modifying our actions and developing new behaviors (thinking patterns) to be more broadminded and adapt to the changing situations. With resilience managers can deliver peak performance i.e. on

frequent basis, they can work at their best while utilizing their maximum potential. Resilience is critical trait to have for middle managers.

(c) Resilience and Middle Managers

Middle managers are key for the organizations as they are working at the frontlines operations, dealing with changes and are expected to make things happen. Managers not only have to experience the change but also have to lead it as change leaders (Behnam Tabrizi (2014)). The successful firms engage actively middle managers in change and innovation initiatives as researched by Behnam Tabrizi (2014) who has noticed this in his research on randomly selected 56 different companies for large scale change and innovation initiatives. Therefore, it is necessary to equip middle managers with the resilience mindset to navigate the continuous change situations.

The link between stress and resilience is researched widely. Centre of creative leadership has found that 75% managers felt that their role cause personal stress (Campbell et al., 2007). Salvatore Maddi and Suzanne Kobasa (1984) have found in their research on big companies that two-third of the managers reported difficulties in coping changes and got stress related problems. The remaining one third not only successfully coped with but also thrived because of their hardiness- a kind of resilient mindset (Maddi and Kobasa, 1984).

(d) Resilience and Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership approach, as described by Bernard M. Bass, is about motivating, morale lifting, and enhancing performance by a variety of mechanisms with ultimate goal of transforming the followers into leaders (Bass, 1990). In transformational leadership style, organizational goals are connected with individual's goals. The approach towards change is such that context is transformed rather simply reacting to the change. Such style not only helps middle managers in successfully adapting and thriving in adversaries but also enabling them to impact others. Middle managers with transformations leadership style act as role models. They adopt a common vision, create teams that share trust and work together.

Resilient individuals transmit the same traits of transformational leaders such as positive attitudes and behaviours. The fact is supported by the study conducted by Peterson et al. (2008) where CEO's, having resilient profile, from 105 technological companies in USA were seen as transformational leaders by their employees and were delivering high

performance in the firms (Peterson et al. 2008). This shows the importance of good be-haviours (resilience) for becoming transformational leader and having high performance.

(e) Attributes of a Resilient Manager

Kenton Lewis (2014) mentioned supporting attributes for resilience as (a) having support and caring on mutual reciprocal basis (b) Good in planning and execution (c) Confidence (d) effective communication and problem solution skills (e) ability to deal with strong (good or bad) emotions, feelings, and impulses. Conner (1993) has mentioned five dif-ferentiative qualities of the resilient people that include being positive, being focused, being proactive, being flexible, and having organizational skills.

Seligman (1987), mentioned the way we explain the setbacks to ourselves is important. The three elements of explanatory style are permanence, Pervasiveness and personal-ization. Permanence element is that resilience people are optimistic and they believe that the bad events have temporary effects and not permanent. Pervasiveness element is about that resilient people don't let bad event affect in other aspects of their life. They know the art of controlling the damage by limiting it to certain relevant aspect of life and not to other unrelated areas of lives. Personalization means that resilient people don't blame their selves when something bad happens instead they go through the situation with un-biased approach and take into account other people and circumstances as well.

Crow (2010) has identified some further attributes of resilient people they are mentioned as (a) they have a positive image of future so, they maintain positive outlook and foresee brighter future,(b) they have solid goals and they are bound to achieve them, (c) resilient people are sympathetic and benevolent. At the same time they are not worried about what others think about them. They maintain the relationships and don't get pressurized. (d) They never victimized themselves of situations instead they spend their time and energy wisely on the things they have control over.

(f) Resilience and Mental Toughness

Mental toughness is about getting tough by developing the resilience and confidence. The default response of human's towards stressors, challenges, difficult situations and pressures is changed with mental toughness. Mental toughness results in better perfor-mance and well-being because of new acquired behaviors. They accept challenge and

show normal behaviors without being aggressive or oppressive. Mental toughness applies to every situation we experience and is very vital for middle managers. Mental toughness can be learnt, shaped and mastered.

(g) How to Develop Resilience

Resilience, a personal trait as mentioned earlier, is strongly linked with personal mastery and self-awareness. Whereas, personal mastery and self-awareness requires clarity of ideas and personal reflections i.e. what one is currently and what is important for him or her. In other words, the personal mastery is an introspective view to one's self to learn about his or her self.

Resilience can be developed by either aspiration to be resilient (or, mentally tough) or by learning the best practice by the resilient people in the time of adversity. There is a need to make new behavior or habit.

Hoey (2014) and Lewis (2014) have mentioned few habits to develop resilience, they include as (a) finding purpose in your life both on-job and out of the job, (b) being curious and taking interest and asking question, (c) quick learning from the experiences and mistakes, (d) maintaining self-respect and open to criticism- also, develop self-confidence, (e) developing and maintaining healthy relationships that can create a base of support, (f) careful and honest expressions for others, (g) being tolerant in uncertain situations, or accepting that some situations could not be changed and accepting them as they are is the only option/solution vs. acknowledging the situation, (h) empathy, (I) intuitiveness, (j) ability to transform bad events into good ones and getting energy from them, (k) resilience requires managerial skills, as well (l) re-assessing your interest, skills and talents because that can help to find new patterns of working and attitudes, (m) re-thinking about place of money in your life, (n) grabbing self-development opportunities and learning with others together, (o) taking the big picture in mind and do not making rash decisions as for what could be controlled and what could not, (p) maintaining a work-life balance, and also take care of yourself (both mind and body) by exercising and relaxing. Being resilience help to spend a happier and healthier life.

Resilience requires personal development and gaining new habits and behaviors. The following sections describe the main personal developments in detail that are necessary for a middle manager to become resilient.

4.2.5   Personal Development

A good personal knowledge and development is necessary to perform better as working has become more contextual. The knowledge about yourself empowers you to live a life rather than being lived.

(a) Self-Awareness

Personal reflection of one's strength and weakness is very important because of better knowledge about self. It contributes to the wellbeing of human. Moreover, it allows taking the next steps to personality development by acquiring certain habits. People have difficulty in articulating their strengths and how to apply them whereas about weakness they can point out easily. One way to achieve the personal knowledge i.e. what you want, what motivates and drives you, what makes you happy, what are your strengths or weakness etc. is by writing personal reference guide.

Focusing more on good behaviours than bad behaviours in personality helps in leveraging one's strengths and talents. The importance of thinking about strengths and/or using them daily more than weaknesses, make individuals out-performer. If an individual is good at one thing already and showing high performance then he or she can grow in that the most than other things. This exemplify, the characteristics of children when they are good in one subject already then they learn that subject very easily. The adults too can re-learn this forgotten trait by knowing the strengths and continuously using them and also acquiring the new required ones. Weakness can also serve good point if they are known and rectified especially if they are causing hurdles in implementing something. However, usage of strengths brings the real game changer through high performance.

(i) Personal Journey to Find Sense of Purpose and Meaning

Finding sense of purpose and meaning in life is crucial for high performance. It brings a big source of energy and satisfaction to work and it guides to achieve much higher goals than otherwise possible. It is a lifelong but a rewarding journey to know the purpose and meaning of life.

Visualization is an effective skill in knowing about self. Humans get affected by what they think about in their head. It means visualizing in mind about success or achievement or what one can become and, then experiencing and learning from it. Visualization is a powerful tool for self-motivation as well. This feeling of becoming is in one's own control

so, sense of control is also empowering. In this way, the people start focusing on what they want to be rather than on their mistakes. The role of hero and visualization to become like him or her makes you realize that you are actually like him or her. Visualization comes automatically as a natural response and could not be taught. However, few techniques could help i.e. checking and managing thoughts, guiding imaginations and rehearsal of the activities in mind.

(b) Goal Setting

Goal setting is necessary to get direction and meaning in your work. Goals motivate individuals to get energy so to face challenges and achieve the objectives. Goal settings increase the commitment level as well.

(c) Emotional Intelligence

Emotional management is a mastery of knowing, understanding, and, using or managing emotion in a positive sense. They are important to set oneself in a positive position through respect and trust building.

There is profound relationship between emotions and behaviour. Emotions are feelings and thoughts such as happiness, excitement, embarrassment, stress and anxiety etc. The outcome of emotions results in actions called behaviours; both good and bad behaviours. Good behaviours such as showing respect and safety to others, common good feeling, loyalty, accepting challenges, enthusiastic member, communication, asking for help, developing self and having ideas and sharing with others. Bad behaviours include withdrawal, suspicion, defending one's self, feeling unappreciated, taking no initiative, protesting, criticism, despair, laziness. People with emotional intelligence are motivated and optimistic, and have high standards for themselves; they offer help and lift others. Put their efforts where they feel they are most impactful and empowered and confident. They do not spend time on uncontrollable events feeling helpless, lost and powerless.

(i) Positive Emotions

Positive emotions are thoughts and actions that make one feel happy. Positive emotions energize for the most difficult situations with a constructive mindset. The benefits associated with the positive emotions are increased dedication and competent problems solving. There are few tools that can help learn the positive emotions and bring them to

personality such as forgiveness, sense of gratitude, empathy, hope and optimism, love, sharing good news, appreciation and managing mood or choice of response. There are three sub categories to it, thinking about positive emotions, changing negative emotion's into positive and avoiding negative emotions.

Gratitude is associated with enhancing the happiness. Knowing what make you grateful is important and can be practiced by writing a letter of gratitude. It could be achieved by intentional activities. It involves recalling the achievements that made you happy and proud in past, acknowledging the good things that happened (throughout the day or any period of time), and recognition of happiness source that it lies outside of our self and selfless actions such as random actions of kindness e.g., greetings strangers will make us happy. Forgiveness is also tied emotion with gratitude. Forgiveness is about choosing mercy over revenge and anger. The benefit would be washing out negative thoughts.

(ii) Learned Optimism

To be optimistic and realistic is one's own choice. Self-reflection can help to learn optimism. Learned optimism is about framing or reframing the reality, at the particular moment of time, in a way that is helpful for the individual to react in reflective optimistic way rather than defaults way. This requires increased awareness of the situations because thoughts examinations and subsequent shifting towards realistic and optimists reactions becomes easy.

As, sometimes situations themselves can act as activating the bad feelings and behaviors. It is important to being factual about the situations that can activate the bad feelings in you. Sometimes, assumptions about the situation also dictate our reactions. Sometimes, perception and beliefs about the situation are the reason of being sad and frustrated and, not the situations themselves. It is important to be aware of the beliefs and assumptions about the situations. Bad beliefs invoke bad feelings and behaviors in us. Negative thinking about the situation bring bad feelings and un-healthy behaviors. Similarly, negative self-talk destroys self-esteem and bring despair. As a result, you start judging yourself in an unfair manner by being self-critical, feeling inferior, thinking about weaknesses more, considering failures only, and having despair that future will be even worse. Meanwhile, dealing with the tough situation and negative emotions is must to learn. There are several techniques to attain the optimism i.e. through positive thinking

attribute, which is gained through positive self-talk, making assertive statements, following role models etc.

(iii) Anxiety Control

It is an ability to deal with the fear and panic. These emotions are psychological and have the psychological effects. If not successfully managed then they result in health problems such as breathing, tension and high heart beats. Techniques to control anxiety are muscular relaxing exercises including monitored breathing. Distracting to the activities that one loves to have are good way of controlling anxiety. Another helpful technique for neutralizing the strong emotions, such as fear, panic and danger is fast forward technique. By fast-forwarding, time perspective is changed from present to future e.g., to one year from the time the situation of strong emotions. This simple technique makes the things that seem important, trivial and vice versa. It is important to rehearse fast forward techniques in the mind whilst one is going through the situation. The technique can make individuals strong both mentally and emotionally in any situation.

(iv) Attention Control

Better attention or focus to work yields better quality of work and that too for longer duration of time. Distractions in work not only eat energy but also result in poor quality of work. There are different exercises and techniques such as mindfulness (being active and open to present time while observing thoughts and feelings) which can help to concentrate longer and better. Another techniques, is simply avoiding interruptions and destructions by effective methods.

(d) Stress Management

Continuous change is affecting workplaces in a way they are becoming more and more complex and demanding. The amount and quality of work has increased while at the same time distractions have also increased multi-folds. This situation has created stressful situations at working places and in employee's lives outside the work as well. The stressful situations have lasting effects on the employees' health, performance and work satisfaction and on overall life's happiness. The continuous stress could lead to depression, lack of interest and quick burnout situations. Therefore, to learn expertise to maintain (manage, survive, prevent and/or eliminate) the stressful situations while still thriving in work are very important.

(i) Meditation

Meditation is a tool that brings many benefits as it lightens you up by reducing the stress. The other benefits include good health, increasing memory, learning and control over mind and body.

(ii) Freedom of Choosing Response

The first tool of reducing emotional stress is choosing the right response to stress. It could be reviewing the thoughts towards external events continuously and subsequently adjusting them to helpful and realistic point of views. In this way, default actions towards situations are avoided. Environment or situations do not determine our response. When there is no freedom, human have only option to respond to the environment. However, in case of having freedom, it is humans own choice based on their knowledge, awareness, mental image, conscience and discretion to choose their response. Life is about responsibility, response-ability i.e. the ability to choose response to environment in whatever way we may like, as, there is freedom. To be successful and having less stress it is important to identify and learn this freedom or ability of determining the repose to different stimulus.

(iii) Amygdala Hijacks

Another tool to learn is the ability to prevent the situations that could immediately result in regrets; such situations are called hot-button or amygdala hijacks. There are moments when humans have less freedom to choose between stimulus and response. In these situations, have to respond based on the environment or situation due to e.g., insecurity or sense of threat. These situations could occur when some event triggered self-insecurity or self-protection. The perceived danger could be small, large, physical or mental depending on the event.

These situations take over our natural behaviors and we respond depending on the environment influenced by threat. The freedom of choosing our response is not practiced. However, soon it is realized that whatever is said or have done was unfair or inappropriate. Individual start feeling ashamed but in a meantime he or she has damaged the relationship with the other person by reacting in an unusual way. The solution to avoid such situations is to perceive early enough the danger and take control of your brain by executing the freedom of response. One can take a pause and ask question whether the

response is correct or not and also, is there an alternative response that could be appropriate for the situation. This is not easy at start but with practice it can be learned and mastered.

It is also important to know the situations that result in feeling unsecure and eventually lead to amygdala hijacks. One can go through in past and note the situations that led to regrets. Exploring more about the past situations and knowing what triggered amygdala hijacks, was there any perceived threat, what was the response, what alternative response could be possible, and, what consequence happened. Summarizing these situations tell more about the future similar situation that may occur. One can plan and think of appropriate response to prevent the feeling of regrets beforehand by this exercise.

(e) Behavior Change

To bring change in behavior is difficult and requires strong will-power. With the change in behaviors new habits can be attained. However, it is important to know first our behavior towards those new ambitions and habits and then change them accordingly. These new habits gained by self-reflections and practice, can lead to actions that could happen automatically as if they are part of the personality. As, habit performing does not require will-power because it is done naturally without thinking. Attaining new habits and changing the existing habit is possible. However, gaining new habits is a long term process and come through repeated experimentation. Behavior change and improvements occur slowly as they are not instant events.

The knowledge of the existing techniques can only help to some extent because new behaviors are required so that they become habits. However, there are few techniques, e.g. Schwarz (2011) has made a to-do list for behavior change, which is as follows: (a) create a motivational and realistic ambition, (b) Define the ambition as specifically and precisely as possible, (c) Know the factors you have to resist in the process of implementation i.e. conscious decision, what to do and what not to do, (d) think of other competing commitments to this new habit that need to be met, that could bring conflicts in the brain so, dealing with the mental conflicts while maintaining the new habit, (e) understanding about the fact that at one moment of time only one habit can be developed and that too takes time, typically 30 days. Committing to this long period of time require patience and struggle. Once the new habit is happening without effort then it has become the part of personality or ritual. The new habit can be chosen after that.

(f) Seeking Support

Building and maintaining strong relationships with peers and friends offer good foundation to get help in the time of need. Strong connections at workplace help to fight back stress effectively. Equally important is to have support of friends and family because they provide strong support to rely on. Being compassionate and empathetic with other people is basic to have strong network of support.

(g) Competences

Peter Clough has come up with psychometric measure, MTQ48, to access the metal toughness (or, Resilience). The factors are called 4 C's including control, commitment, challenge and confidence (Strycharczyk & Clough (2014)). Control describes feeling of control over life and emotions which yields motivation and optimism. Commitment describes about ability to set goals, and then meeting them through hard work. Control and commitment together are called resilience. Control is mentioned above under emotional intelligence and commitment is mentioned above under goal setting. In below sections, challenge or risk taking is mentioned along with confidence.

(i) Challenge – Risk Taking

It is about the ability to push back the boundaries, face the change and take risks. It is also about seeing the results of some activities as good or bad. Person having this challenge ability is embracing change and see it as an opportunity to grow rather than a threat. Persons with high challenge mindset feel comfortable to meet new people, visit new places, they live out of their comfort zone, and are open to new thoughts and ideas that can lead to innovation and creativity.

(ii) Confidence

Confidence is about how much person belief himself and his abilities. Self-confidence assures that eventually the situation of stress and challenge will be overcome. This also encourage them to take challenge and risks that attitude help to move forward. Interpersonal confidence is about influencing others and facing challenging situations.

(iii) Learning from Experiences

It is key skill to reflect and learn from experiences and failure as it is good for personal growth. It is important to learn from experiences and failures rather than moving on to the next situation because offer something important to learn from. Kolb (1984) have suggested learning style model as shown in Figure 2 below.
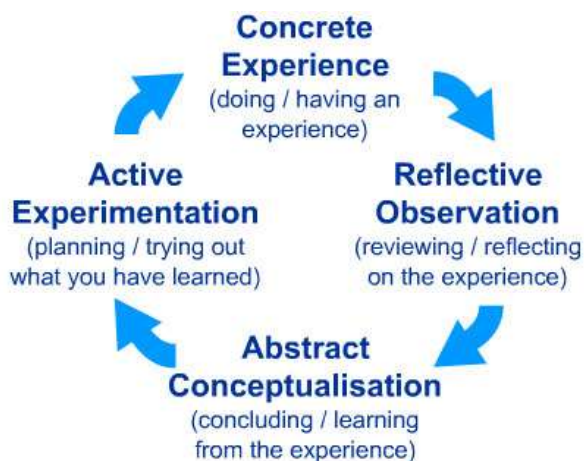
Figure 2. Experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 1984).

The model offers the process that can be used for reflecting and learning from the experiences. The model can be used for becoming resilient. For example, individual have a challenging experience utilize his skills sets according to the situation demand. Then he or she can review that exploring all the details of the experience. Thinking about the context, expectations, actions performed their impact and outcome that emerged. Review about the special methods, how they worked and whether they were suitable for the situation or not. After review, conclude the experience by summarizing the lessons learnt from the experience, which approaches worked and which not. Based on the lessons learnt, plan new actions for performing better or search for alternatives.

(iv) Adaptive Attitude

Having adaptive attitude makes it easy to adjust to changing environment. Being Adaptive is about willingness to amend and/or scrap the plans according to the demand of situation.

(h) Health

Better health is basic thing to have to face challenges. With better mind and body, individual is effectively prepared for facing challenges in life. It is important to have enough sleep. Exercise helps in maintaining heath and managing stress.

(I) Career Choices

Middle managers may face career dilemma amid continuous change. Continuous changes are affecting the organizations in a way that teams are becoming smaller, tasks are becoming bigger, and organizations becoming flat. There would be a demand of working outside the fields of expertise due to commercial reasons. Middle managers having many years of experience in their respective fields can re-adjust to this change.

Megally (2015) has proposed few tips to tackle the ongoing career situation. (a) Adapt to the commercial mindset by willing to work even outside of the field of expertise, (b) have a drive for get things done, (c) have a resilience and emotional intelligence, (d) understand the company and its strategy and find best match with the company by building strong networks. Middle managers should develop their self at their own, without waiting organizational help to develop them.

4.3   Conceptual Framework of This Thesis

The conceptual framework is presented in Figure 3. There are two main components i.e. mindsets and personal developments. Mindsets include further two blocks including process mindset and resilience mindset.

In Process mindset, people are involved in the process with conflicting interests, thoughts and solutions. The collaboration between the stakeholders may lead to conflicts among the stakeholders leading to stressful situations. However, this is attractive for all as all can contribute in the process with their solutions. The end result would be co-created among all the stakeholder. The process mind demands for greater flexibility and adaptability.

The resilience mindset is thought to be ideal for continuous change. Resilient is about bouncing back attitude while maintaining true personality not affected by the adversities individual has many attributes few of them are positive image of future, goal setting and being empathetic and compassionate. There are several ways to develop resilience. These ways are mentioned in personal development block.
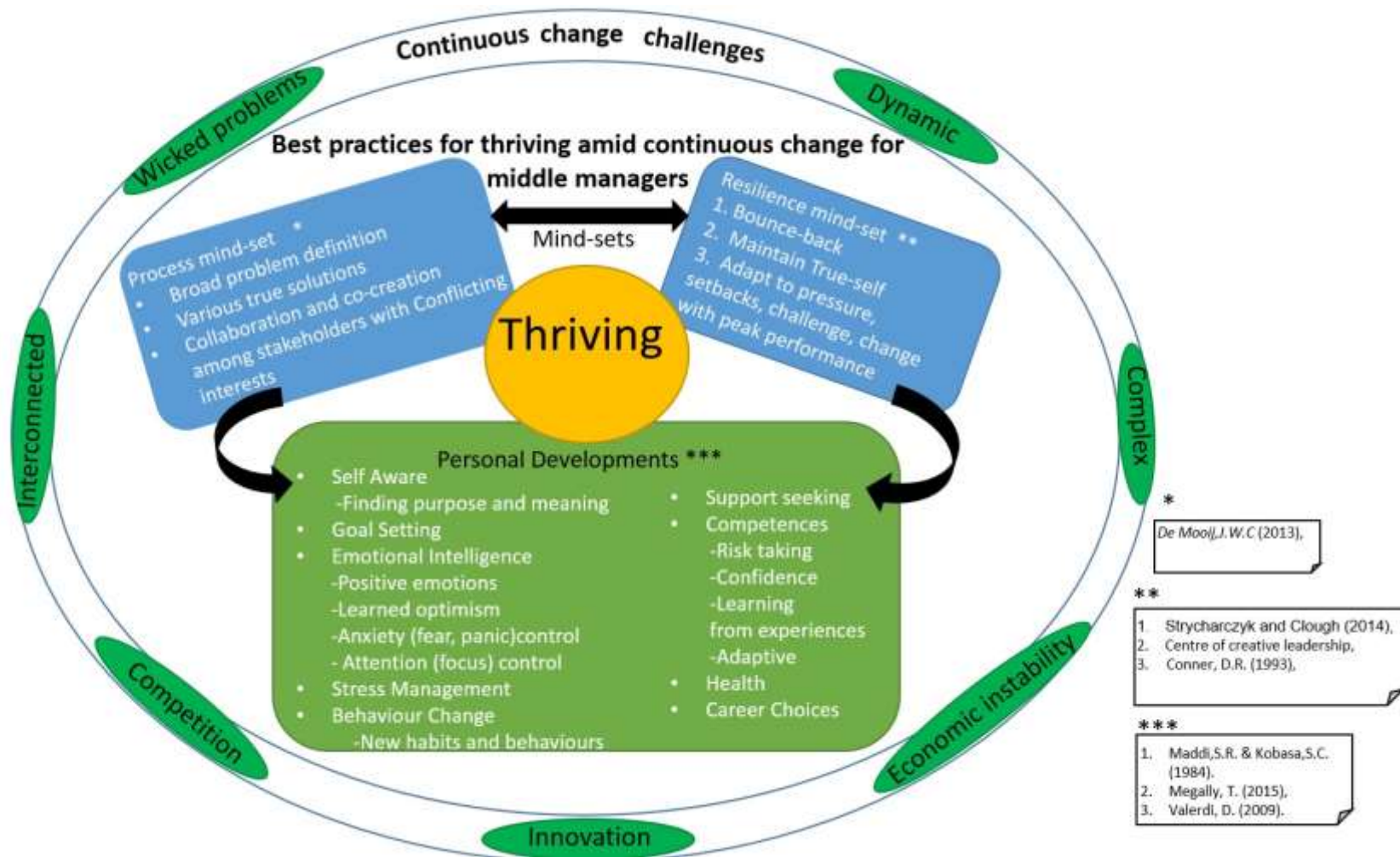
Figure 3. Conceptual framework of the thesis.

Both of the mindsets, the process mindset and the resilience mindset, require personal developments and are linked with personal development block. Also, process and resilience mindset are connected to each other showing the importance of each other. Thriving of middle managers is dependent on having the mindsets of process and resilience and at the core personal skills.

The personal developments block has listed many skills. The details are mentioned in above sections. Summary of the skills is mentioned here. Self-awareness is the cornerstone of thriving amid continuous change. It reveals the present day scenario of the individual and what improvement is needed and what works and what not for the individual. Finding purpose and meaning in life is crucial. The competences of emotional intelligence, stress tolerance and behavior change are must to attain in order to thrive in the face of continuous change. As mentioned earlier, the continuous change brings stress and as for behavior change. The importance of being focused, having positive emotions, optimism and control over anxiety is understandable.

The working stress management technique are helpful for middle managers to face the stressful situation. New habits and behavior would be required to acquire. Risk taking and living out of the comfort zone would be fundamental to be innovative and growing in the face of continuous change as old time tested solution would not work amid continuous change. Middle manager would require strong social support of friends, colleagues and family amid continuous change. Therefore, investing on relationship building and maintaining them would be beneficial to ask for help in the time of need. The relationships are good for ideas generation and testing.

Risk taking, confidence and being adaptive are quite relevant skills for continuous change. Also, the art of learning from experience is must for growth. Better analysis of the experience and perceiving them as opportunity of growth is good attitude for growth in the face of continuous change. Learning all available tools and techniques for self-mastery, change management and resilience are good knowledge sources to have.

Future seems difficult in terms of job market where individuals will be switching jobs at fast pace and will be required to work even out of their fields of expertise. This situation demands for change in mindset towards job and work from long lasting professions to variable and fluctuating works. The required skills would be engaging in lifelong learning

process having growth mindset, gaining the skills that are commercial attractive, having long sighted vision and being adaptive to the situations.

In a nutshell, literature suggests multiple ideas or best practice for individuals to develop themselves and grow. However, when limiting the scenario to the best practice for middle manager and that too in the time of continuous change, resilience and process management mindsets along with personal developments were found relevant.

5   Building Proposal for Guidelines for Middle Managers

In this section, the following things are presented: proposal building overview, findings of data collection 2 and the proposal draft. This section merges the results of the current state analysis and the conceptual framework towards the building of the proposal.

5.1   Overview of the Proposal Building Stage

This sections describes the logic of proposal building for this study i.e. how proposal building process happened, what are the elements, and briefly telling about the stakeholders involved.

Data 1, current state analysis, has yielded three main themes what kind of continuous changes are happening, how companies are dealing and how managers are coping with them. These main weaknesses are selected as an outcome from the current state analysis. These weaknesses (challenges) identified in the current state analysis lead to the search for relevant topics from best practice in the literature. The best practice in the literature resulted in conceptual framework.

In the current state analysis stage, middle managers were also asked about the skills required by the managers to successfully deal with continuous change. Their replies are analyzed in this chapter. The current state analysis gave clues what to read in literature for best practice for middle managers for continuous change.

The conceptual framework served as basis for proposal building. Initial proposal was developed based on the conceptual framework, the current state analysis, data 2 and (part of data 1) that was related to proposal building. The informants in data 1 and data 2 were different therefore, it was necessary to ask at data 1 stage about the skills that could be suitable for the middle managers for continuous change.

In data 2, the initial proposal was presented to the interviewees for discussion and improvements. Six other middle managers were approached for three main questions regarding continuous change management. These questions were formulated based on the current state results of their dealing with continuous change, their desired state of dealing and their recommendation for successfully dealing with continuous change

based on their knowledge and experience. Their replies were also included in the conceptual framework. The draft is named as the initial proposal.

This initial proposal is further discussed with the two middle managers. These two managers were from the six managers approached for proposal building i.e. for data 2. Their feedback is also implemented in the proposal since it contributed in proposal improvement and was considered as part of proposal building.

The new proposal is named as the updated proposal. The updated proposal contains elements from the conceptual framework, data 2 (both email replies and face-to-face discussion) and the elements of data 1 that deal with the proposal building.

The interviewees in data 2 were largely different from data 1. Only one interviewee was from data 1. This is done deliberately to broaden the scope in order to get more ideas from the managers. Additionally, managers in data 1 were already asked about how to successfully deal with continuous change. This approach resulted in broader opinions that were subsequently put in the proposal.

5.2   Findings of Data Collection 1 and 2

In data 1, interviewees were asked about the skills required to successfully deal with the continuous changes for middle managers. The findings about the proposed skills are mentioned in this section. Their replies are summarised into the following themes:

Most of the managers mentioned the following skills as necessary to have. These include as adaptability, flexibility, understanding and listening to all ideas and comments (replied by many), prioritizing tasks, systematic working, technical development at fast pace, confidence about pulling out of the situation, good stress tolerance, calm nerves, patient, Ability to see further (in a longer scope), courage to accept the change and adapt to it, Assertiveness and being active taking interest, Be strategic and also tactical. One of the managers has mentioned that managers have to do technical developments at fast pace from few days to few weeks. Feasibility and skills required to complete the project are assessed before the start of the project. Prioritizing and communication with relevant departments are done. Seeing big picture and at the same time doing the process at fast pace is pace is strategy to cope with the change in IT service management industry as

mentioned by the interviewee. The skills mentioned above are part of the updated pro-posal and shown in white color in the proposal.

In data 2, mangers were asked for the recommendations of successfully dealing with the change. Their replies are put in the initial proposal. Later, initial proposal was discussed with two the managers in face-to-face meetings that resulted in updated proposal. The updated proposal contains four elements: (a) personal developments (b) efficient change management (c) process and project management mindset, and (d) grit and resilience mindset. The origin of each suggestion for personal development is shown in Table 7. In this way, the co-creation with the stakeholder is summarized in a tabular form. The sug-gestion of adding new skill or removing the conceptual framework existing skill is also shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Origin of the suggestions for personal developments (CF or Data 2).

I. Personal Development		
Conceptual framework	**Data2**	**Updated Proposal**
Self-Aware	-	Self-Aware
Finding purpose and meaning	-	Finding purpose and mean-ing
Goal Setting	-	
Emotional Intelligence	-	Emotional Intelligence
Positive emotions	-	-
Learned optimism	-	-
Anxiety (fear, panic) con-trol	-	-
-	Readiness for change -> Open & embracing change	Open & embracing change
Attention (focus) control	-	-
Stress Management	Stress tolerance	Stress tolerance
Behaviour Change	-	-

New habits and behaviours	-	New habits and behaviours
Support seeking	-	Support seeking
-	Work-life balance	Work-life balance
-	Intuition	Intuition
-	Living in present (Now)	Living in present (Now)
Competences	-	Competences
	Positive attitude	Positive attitude
Risk taking	-	Risk taking
Commitment	-	Commitment
-	Growth mindset	Growth mindset
Confidence	-	Confidence
Learning from experiences	-	Learning from experiences
Adaptive	Highly adaptive	Highly adaptive
Health	-	-
Career Choices	Career resilience	Career resilience

As shown in Table 7, the columns contain elements of the updated proposal. First block of the updated proposal is *personal development*. The entries of the personal developments are shown, on the left column, as entries from the conceptual framework, on the middle column, as entries of data 2 and data 1, and on the right column, the entries form the updated proposal. All the elements mentioned are part of the proposal. The elements shown in Table 7 that came from data 2 can further be checked in Appendix 2.

The second element in the updated proposal is efficient *change management*. The elements of this block mostly came from data 2. First they were put in personal developments later a new block with the name of efficient change management was created. There are few elements that also came from data 1 (part of proposal building). However, those elements are merged in data 2 for simplicity of the table.

Table 8 explains the origins of the elements of the second block.

Table 8. Origin of suggestions for efficient change management (CF or data 2).

II.	Efficient Change Management	
Conceptual framework	**Data2**	**Updated Proposal**
Goal Setting	-	Goal Setting
-	Effective Communication	Effective Communication
-	Understanding and adapting to co-workers	Understanding and adapting to co-workers
-	Understanding and listening to all ideas and comments (un-biased)	Understanding and listening to all ideas and comments (un-biased)
-	Systematic perspective	Systematic perspective
-	Work in milestones	Work in milestones
-	Effective time and resources management	Effective time and resources management
-	Proactive approach	Proactive approach
-	Delegation->Choosing right person	Delegation->Choosing right person
-	Be 'Change' leader	Be 'Change' leader
-	Transparency	Transparency
-	Knowledge of best change management practices	Knowledge of best change management practices

As shown in Table 8, right column contains all the elements of the updated proposal. Data 2 elements have reference in Appendix 2.

The third element from the update proposal focuses on grit and resilience mindset. The concept of grit was introduced in data 2 whereas the resilience mindset came from the conceptual framework. The distinction is clear from Table 9 below.

Table 9 explains the origins of the elements of the third block.

Table 9. Origin of suggestions for grit and resilience mindset (CF or data 2).

III. Grit and Resilience Mindset		
Conceptual framework	**Data2**	**Updated Proposal**
Resilience mindset	Grit and Resilience mindset	Grit and Resilience mindset
Bounce-back	-	Bounce-back
Maintain True-self	-	Maintain True-self
Adapt to pressure, setbacks, challenge, change with peak performance	-	Adapt to pressure, setbacks, challenge, change with peak performance
-	Long view	Long view
-	Perseverance and passion for long-term goals	Perseverance and passion for long-term goals
-	Sustained and focused application of talent over time	Sustained and focused application of talent over time

As shown in Table 9, the right column of above table shows the updated proposal. The elements mentioned are part of the proposal. The elements in Table 9 that came from data 2 can further be checked in Appendix 2.

The fourth element of the updated proposal is *process and project management mindsets*. In chapter four, both 'process and project managements' mindsets were discussed. However, in conceptual framework only process management mindset was presented because it is relevant for continuous change. In the interviews of proposal building stage, the term 'process management mindset' caused some confusion. Interviewers have to explain the very meaning of the term and also its counterpart project management mindset and their difference. Interviewees gave feedback that both should be included to avoid confusion. Also, project management mindset is utilized, sometimes along with process management mindset and sometimes alone depending on the nature of the problem. Therefore, in the updated proposal both mindsets are included.

Table 10 explains the origins of the elements of the fourth block.

Table 10. Origin of suggestion for process and project mindsets (CF or data 2).

IV. Process and Project Mindsets		
Conceptual framework	**Data2**	**Updated Proposal**
Process management mind-set	Project Management Mindset	Process management mindset and project management mindsets
Broad problem definition	-	Broad problem definition
Various true solutions	-	Various true solutions
Collaboration and co-creation among stakeholders with Conflicting interests.	-	Collaboration and co-creation among stakeholders with Conflicting interests.
-	Precise problem definition	Precise problem definition
-	one solution	one solution
-	Clear goals provide direction to other actors	Clear goals provide direction to other actors

In Table 10, the right column of above table shows the updated proposal. The elements mentioned are part of the proposal. The elements in Table 10 that came from data 2 can further be checked in Appendix 2.

5.3 Proposal Draft

The draft of the proposal is named as updated proposal as the final draft is presented after the feedback of the managers (in the next chapter, after validation).

There are four blocks of the proposal at this stage. They are mentioned as personal developments, efficient change management, grit and resilience mindset, and the process and project mindset. Each block of the proposal is explained against the elements of data 2 (which are shown in white color) while the elements of the block in black color are already mentioned in chapter 4. The proposal draft is shown in Figure 7 below.

5.3.1   Personal Development

First block of the proposal is personal developments. The new elements that came in data 2 are stress tolerance, positive attitude, open and embracing change, work-life balance, living in present (Now), intuition, highly adaptive and growth mindset. First block of the proposal, personal developments, is shown in Figure 4 below.

Stress tolerance is suggested as replacement of stress management which is explained in detail in chapter 4. *Positive attitude* is suggested by the managers. The reported responses that falls under positive attitude were that managers should have prepared minds for the change so that change does not create panic for them. It was also mentioned that the way managers anticipate any change should improve as often there is cognitive biases towards the change that does not relate to the change. Therefore, checking the thinking towards change is important. It is also mentioned that stable state of mind is a must to have for facing continuous change. In short, managers should absorb the change right away and should build their own way of adapting to change.

It was mentioned that the managers should have readiness for future and change. In proposal building stage, it was mentioned that openness and embracing change is elaborative words than readiness. They show the proactive approach than the word readiness for change which shows reactive approach i.e. as managers are waiting change to happen. *The open and embracing attitude* shows that managers are willing to adapt to change and treat it in an unbiased way.

Figure 4. Proposal on personal developments.

Work-life balance is another thing that is mentioned in data 2. This is important to ensure that managers are enjoying both their work and life. With increasing pace of change, though it is difficult to maintain the balance, however, it is must for happy and stress free life. One of the managers has mentioned the power of *living in the present* i.e. in *Now.* The thinking about past and future are sometime misleading and people forget to enjoy present moments or could not perform better as mind is occupied with the past or future thinking.

One of the managers has mentioned as being *Intuitive* one of the core skill to have for thriving in present world which is full of challenges. He has mentioned that

> *"with MBTI personality typing you know that about 74% of the population are sensing (living in the here-and-now, fact based, valuing past experiences, loyal, hierarchy focused, and natural rule followers) and about 26% are intuitive people".*

> *(Informant 6, appendix 2, p. 3(4))*

He further mentioned that

> *"The intuitive are future focused, they are drawn to idea/concept/theories, they are comfortable with uncertainty and often they are natural leaders and have a higher intelligence".*

> *(Informant 6, appendix 2, p. 3(4))*

In data 2, managers have suggested that continuous change demands as being highly adaptive. Therefore, the word is replaced from adaptive to *highly adaptive.* In data 2, it is also suggested that the managers should have *growth mindset,* not fixed mindset.

5.3.2 Efficient Change Management

Second block of the proposal is efficient change management. Almost all the elements here came from data 2. These elements have roots in Appendix 1 and 2 as some came from data 1 and some from data 2. Therefore, all the elements in the second block, efficient change management, are marked in white colour, as shown in Figure 5 below.

Efficient change management starts with *effective communication.* Effective communication is emphasized by many managers. It was suggested that communication with peers and bosses about the change is quite helpful in order to mitigate the uncertainty

associated with the change. In this way, undue stress caused by uncertainty is avoided by smoothening of the situation through communication. Another solution to tackle initial uncertainty about change is proposed as doing something that manager feel appropriate, this may lead to conflicts, however, ultimately, it can lead to some solution. Additionally, it was recommended to stay up-to-date and trying to be involved in the situation from start. This allows assessment of the competences needed for the change. So, keeping an open eye makes it easy to know where the situation is leading to.

It is suggested by one manager that communication with the employees in open working environment, encourage them to tell beforehand about their moving from the company. It is mentioned by another manager that good communication skills are needed to tell about the change to others so that they understand the message easily. It was mentioned that understanding and adapting to the people in workplace is very important. It is the next step from self-aware i.e. you have to be aware of the people you are working with. It is recommended to know their personality types and treat them accordingly.

Efficient Change Management
- Goal Setting
- Effective Communication
- Understanding and adapting to co-workers
- Understanding and listening to all ideas and comments (un-biased)
- Systematic perspective
    - Work in milestones
    - Effective time and resources management
    - Proactive approach
    - Delegation->Choosing right person
- Be 'Change' leader
- Transparency
- Knowledge of best change management practices

Figure 5. Proposal on efficient change management.

It is mentioned by one manager that understanding and listening to all ideas and comments regarding change is important, since every information piece shared has some role and purpose. The attitude towards the change should be unbiased. It was mentioned that systematic perspective should be maintained. The work should be done in milestones, time and resources should be managed in an effective way, approach towards change should be proactive. When needed the delegation of work should be done in such a way that the person is most eligible in performing the tasks. One of the managers from fast paced IT service management has mentioned that, it is required to have ability

to keep cool head as when a lot of things happening it is easy to get lost. Managers have to have the ability to formulate action plan quickly. Mangers have to do the hard part of getting everyone on-board by synchronising with others.

It was mentioned that it is necessary to *lead the change* rather manage it. He mentioned that

> *"By this I mean being part of leading myself, team, co-workers or customers to prepare for the future changes".*
>
> *(Informant 2, Appendix 2, p.1 (4))*

One manager has mentioned that *keeping transparency* i.e. keeping things visible about what need to be done and communicating with the team makes change happen easy as everyone needs to know what is happening. Finally, it is mentioned by one of the managers that

> *"it is important that middle managers have done courses in change management or are familiar with the practices of change management".*
>
> *(Informant 1, Appendix 1, p.5 (11))*

5.3.3   Grit and Resilience Mindset

Third block in the proposal is grit and resilience mindset. Grit is a new concept that came in data 2, whereas resilience mindset is discussed in detail in chapter 4. Grit is about maintaining a long view and makes a popular concept in sports and military. Sportsmen maintain long view by sacrificing something for their long term goals. It is about perseverance and passion for long term goals. It is much needed skill for continuous change situation because managers could easily get lost in the situation and could compromise on long term goals.

Third block in the proposal, the grit and resilience mindset, is shown in Figure 6 below.
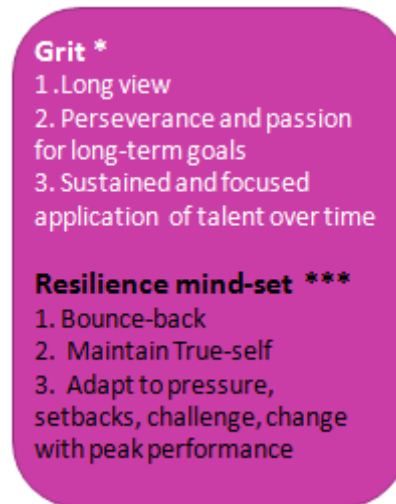
Figure 6. Proposal on Grit and resilience mindset.

5.3.4   Process and Project Mindsets

Fourth block of the proposal is the process and project mindsets. Both of these mindsets are discussed in detail in chapter 4. The block is shown in Figure 7 below.
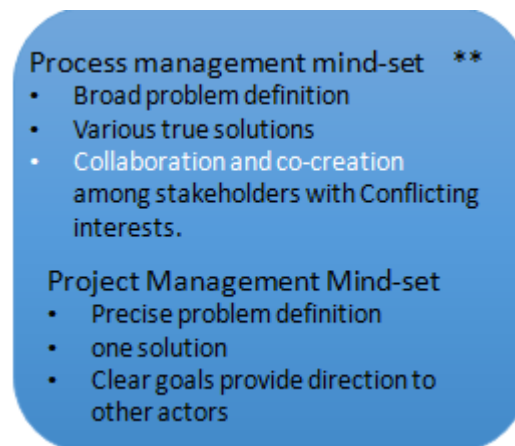
Figure 7. Proposal of the process and project mindsets.

5.3.5   Updated Proposal of the Thesis

The complete proposal is shown in Figure 8 below. As mentioned earlier, there are four blocks in the proposal. The blocks are interconnected to one another. The four blocks are revolving across thriving which is at center of the circle.

Best practices for thriving amid continuous change for middle managers

Process management mind-set **
- Broad problem definition
- Various true solutions
- Collaboration and co-creation among stakeholders with Conflicting interests.

Project Management Mind-set
- Precise problem definition
- one solution
- Clear goals provide direction to other actors

Process mind-set

Project Mind-set

Grit and Resilience mind-set

Thriving

Personal Developments

Efficient change management

Grit *
1 .Long view
2. Perseverance and passion for long-term goals
3. Sustained and focused application of talent over time

Resilience mind-set *
1. Bounce-back
2. Maintain True-self
3. Adapt to pressure, setbacks, challenge, change with peak performance

Efficient Change Management
- Goal Setting
- Effective Communication
- Understanding and adapting to co-workers
- Understanding and listening to all ideas and comments (un-biased)
- Systematic perspective
  - Work in milestones
  - Effective time and resources management
  - Proactive approach
  - Delegation->Choosing right person
- Be 'Change' leader
- Transparency
- Knowledge of best change management practices

Personal Developments **
- Self Aware
   -Finding purpose and meaning
- Emotional Intelligence
- Stress tolerance
- New habits and behaviours
   -Support seeking
   -Positive attitude
   -Open & embracing change
- Work-life balance
- Living in present (Now)
- Competences
  -Intuition
  - Risk taking
  - Commitment
  - Confidence
  - Learning from experiences
  -Highly adaptive
- Growth mind-set
- Career resilience

*
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****
1. Maddi,S.R. & Kobasa,S.C. (1984).
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Figure 8. Updated proposal of the thesis.

The four blocks of the proposal contain many elements in them. These elements are in white and black colors. The black ones came from the best practice summarized in the conceptual framework and the white ones from data 2 or data 1 (proposal building part). Only white elements were explained in this chapter above. The black ones were already discussed in chapter 4.

6   Validation of the Proposal

This section discusses findings from data collection 3 and the final updated proposal. The final proposal is based on the feedback and is extended with the recommendation and future action plan at the end.

6.1   Overview of the Validation Stage

In order to validate the proposal, four managers were contacted for proposal validation and feedback. The three managers were new and the fourth one was also interviewed for data collection 1. They recommended few improvements in some parts of the proposal. After the implementation of their recommendation, proposal is named as the final proposal.

6.2   Findings of Data Collection 3

As one out of four managers has given positive reviews about proposal but he has given some recommendations about presentation of the proposal in thesis. Whereas the second manager has given some ideas about the way proposal could be presented in pictorial form. One of the ideas proposed was about presentation of the four blocks i.e. Efficient change management, Grit and Resilience mindset, Personal development, and Project and process mindset in a way that put the thriving bubble in the upward direction. However, it could not be applied as the proposal was already approved by the other three.

One manager has given some suggestions about the fourth block, project and process management mindset. He has suggested four new things i.e. problem resolution, conflict resolution, team management and expectation management. He has recommended these elements saying that they are important and should be included in the proposal. His suggestions were followed and Project and process model is changed to 'Essential management skills' in light of his recommendations. He further suggested another point of 'self-audit', which is added in the model under Personal developments. He also recommended some change of colors in Grit and resilience block saying that grit is an important block so it should be placed more visibly so it could catch sight quickly. His suggestions were followed as mentioned by him.

The fourth manager has given very positive reviews about the proposal and did not pick any flaws about the suggested guidelines. However, he has suggested a few points in the third block which were implemented.

6.3   Final Proposal

Based on the collected feedback, the final proposal is presented in Figure 9. The proposal is the same as updated proposal in chapter 5 except for some changes in the process and project mindsets which is changed to 'Essential management skills'. Now the 'process and project mindsets' were also extended with the sub-part of problem resolution. This is done on the basis of recommendations of middle managers. As both process and project mindsets deal with the problems so, logically they could be themed under problem resolution. Managers can choose any of these two depending on the nature of the problem. The process mindset is for global problems and project is for local problems. However, co-creation and collaboration is necessary for solving interconnected problems where many stakeholders with conflicting interest are taking part. Hence, the importance of process management mindset is valid for continuous change. Managers can mix these two approaches as well again depending on the context of the problem.

Another new skill mentioned is 'self-audit' that is placed under Personal developments. It is about reviewing the situation after certain time to check whether the situation is sustainable or not. Sustainability are not only important and good for self but also for family, business and career. This is kind of self-interest insuring amid all what is happening around the manager. The feeling of over-burden is avoided by self-audit as through this potential risks are avoided. Burn-out managers are definitely not good for business besides their own selves. The manager quoted *'don't forget to breathe'* in support of his opinion about self-audit.

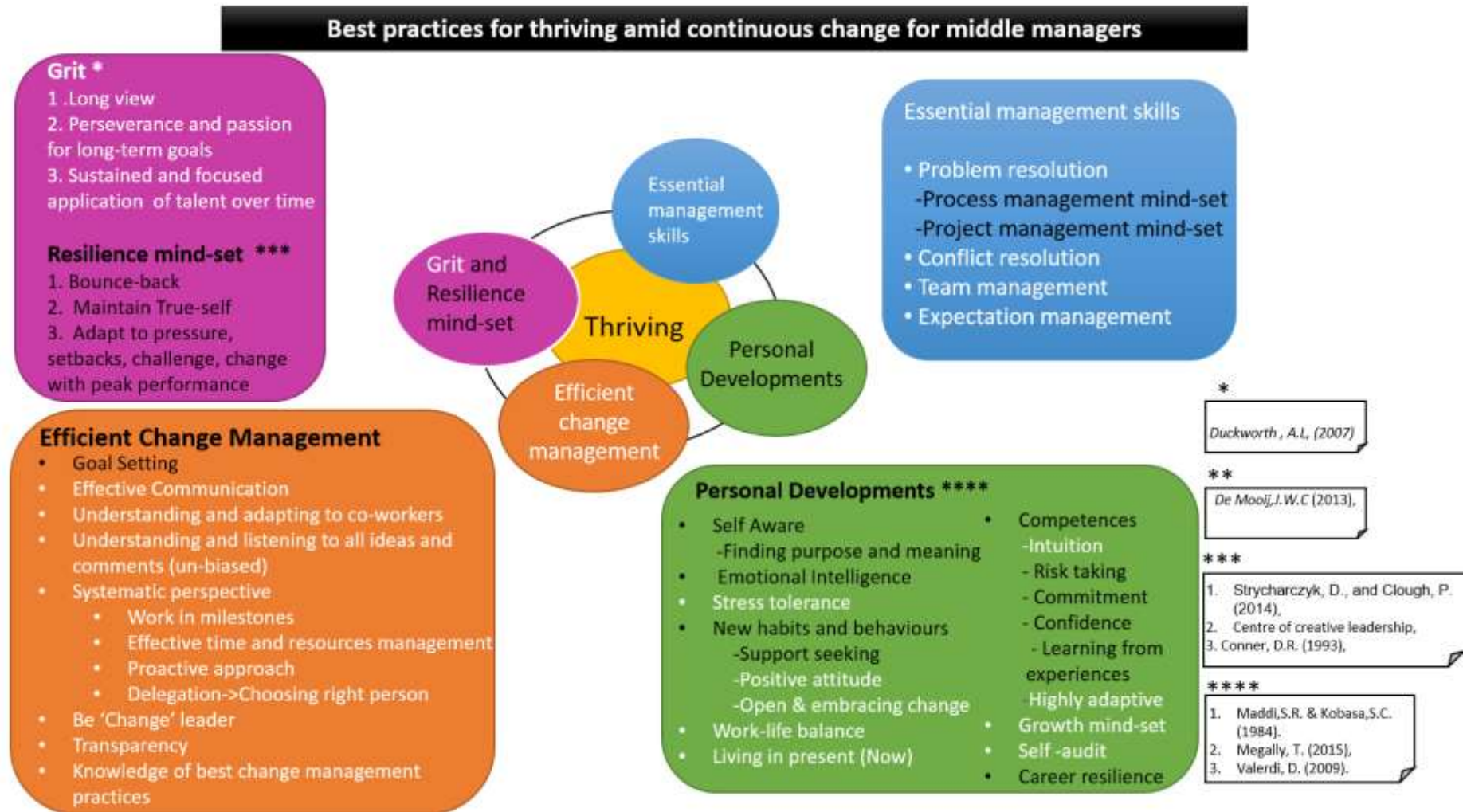The final proposal is presented in Figure 9 below.

Figure 9. The final proposal on best practice for middle managers.

The remaining elements in other blocks in the proposal are unchanged and have already been explained in the previous chapters four and five.

6.4   Recommendations

The study tried to propose relevant guidelines or best practice for middle managers linking all the components i.e. middle managers, thriving and continuous change. The proposed best practice and guidelines were also thoroughly discussed with the middle managers. However, in order to make them more relevant and presentable, there could be given a number of further recommendations before implementing the proposed guidelines into practice.

First, there should be a workshop of four to eight middle managers. They should discuss each element in the block of proposal to ascertain its relevance and weightage to above mention three components. Carefully selected managers should discuss each element and make them concise and specific if they are not already. Workshop could serve the purpose as it may result in weightage wise guidelines for middle managers for thriving in continuous change. However, there is a potential disadvantage in workshop that it may lead to wrong side if properly not handled. Therefore, an expert in the subject should conduct the workshop.

Next, it could be recommended that the proposed guidelines are given to the middle managers working in the field to experience the difference with the application of these guidelines. In this way, improvement in their personal and working life can be assessed by these proposals.

7 Discussion and Conclusions

This section presents summary of the thesis, practical / managerial implications, evaluation of the thesis, outcome vs objective and reliability and validity about the thesis.

7.1 Summary

Change is the only constant in the present day world. Working in today's world is difficult due to many factors such as continuous change, interdependent, interconnected, dynamic and complex nature of businesses. In terms of dealing with these changes, there are a number of change management guidelines available for top management or change managers. However, there are not many guidelines for middle managers for coping especially in the time of continuous change. As middle managers make an important part of the company therefore, it is necessary to have such guidelines for them so that they can successfully face the continuous change. The objective of the thesis was to propose such guidelines for middle managers. The guidelines should enable them to thrive in continuous change.

The current state analysis shows that continuous change initiatives happening in industries or organizations are affecting middle managers. Middle managers seem worried with the situation as there is uncertainty and pressure to learn new skills. It has been found that middle manager largely do not have personal strategy for continuous change management. They were seemed keen to have such strategy to successfully cope with the situation.

Best practice in literature shows that middle managers need to thrive based on change of mindset and acquisition of new skill and behaviours. Actually, there is a need of mindset change towards change. There are two mindsets proposed in conceptual framework of this thesis, (a) project and process management mindsets and (b) resilience mindset. Besides the mindsets, middle managers need to engage in personal development for learning new skills and behaviors. Personal development enable them to successfully cope and thrive amid continuous change. Thriving is the desired state of performance in the time of stress and pressures.

Project mindset starts with a specific problem, its precise definition and ends with a single right solution. However, the process mindset is about working with stakeholders having

various conflicting interests, different problem definitions and approaches to solve the problem. The problem definition is broad and there is no one right solution of the problem. The broad definition of the problem and various solutions encourage collaboration of working. Therefore, the process mindsets is suitable for complex and dynamic situations where stakeholders have conflicting interests. Therefore, it demands for being adaptive and flexible. The mastery and proper use of both of these mindsets help middle managers amid continuous change.

Resilience mindset is the suitable response to continuous change. It is suitable for middle managers as it help them to maintain their true-self in the face of frequent setbacks and challenges. Resilience is an on-going process of attaining the ability to work at normal, healthy level amid adversaries. This personal trait could be learned and mastered through practice. Being resilient help to spend a happier and healthier life as it is about change of mindset.

Besides the mindsets, middle managers need to learn new skills and behaviors to successfully cope and thrive amid continuous change. Although change has become constant, but the response to change is definitely one's own choice. Response could be denial, avoidance and resistance vs. proactive, engaged and involvement (Lewis 2010). The new skills and behaviours include finding sense of purpose and meaning through self-reflection, stress management, emotional intelligence. Support seeking attitude along with risk taking, confidence, adaptive and ability to learn from experiences are also part of personal development block of conceptual framework.

In this study, the final proposal comes as a result of discussions on the steps proposed in the conceptual framework and co-creation with middle managers for co-creation of the guidelines and has resulted in. There are four blocks in the proposal i.e. (a) personal developments, (b) grit and resilience mindset, (c) efficient change management, and (d) essential management skills. Each block is supporting the thriving which lies in the centre. All four blocks are connected with it in circle showing closeness and dependence of one another. Each block contain a number of other elements. There are new elements in the block added by the middle managers. The list of skills mentioned is quite big, but since it is co-created with middle managers and through best practice in literature, it adds value to it. The proposed best practice were considered useful and valuable by managers in feedback and validation phase.

The proposed skills for middle managers to thrive in continuous change include the following four blocks. Grit is about a long view into the future while maintaining perseverance and focused application of talent over the period of time. Personal development included new elements such as positive attitude, openness and embracing attitude towards change, work-life balance, living in present and intuition. Efficient change management is based on mostly recommendations from middle managers. The main elements of this are listening and understanding all ideas and comments, setting goals, understanding and adapting to peers, systematic working, transparency, and knowledge about tools and techniques about change management practices. The other management practices include problem resolution through process and project approach or mixing these two, conflict resolution, team management and expectation management. All these elements are important to have in working in teams.

The mentioned skills and mindsets are suitable for thriving in the face of continuous change for middle managers as it is co-created list with the managers.

7.2   Managerial Implications

The study addresses the vital challenge of proposing guidelines for middle managers for thriving amid continuous change. This challenge is quite valid as surprisingly there is no targeted guidelines for middle managers for continuous change situation. Middle managers seem worried, as seen in the current state analysis of this thesis, due to continuous change challenges. The interviewed managers expressed interest in having such personal strategy for continuous change. The proposal provide many new relevant elements along with prevalent knowledge. The proposal is co-created with key stakeholders i.e. with the middle managers themselves. The suggested proposal and detailed analysis of the situation could serve a good base for thriving for middle managers. The proposal contain many skills that managers can choose based on their needs. There are also some new concepts that are usually not common to managers.

7.3   Evaluation of the Thesis

It has been tried to conduct this study in an orderly manner and stick to the goal of the thesis. The current state analysis, conceptual framework and proposal building were conducted as planned in research design.

During the current state analysis, ten middle managers were interviewed from different industries having average working experience of above 6 years. There were no managers from the same department and/or organizations. The diversity in middle managers has provided diverse opinions about the prevailing situation. It helped to formulate broad and diverse proposal for different managers. The literature review provides a wide range of best practice discussed in details. Not all the elements were reflected in the conceptual framework of the thesis as some were sub-parts of the big theme that is shown in the conceptual framework.

The conceptual framework for proposal building was discussed with two middle managers in the face-to-face meeting. Six other middle managers gave their insights via email messages to a list of questions. This makes a limitation of the study, as it would be better if all the managers were approached for face-to-face discussion and interviews. The resultant updated model is further validated for feedbacks to four different middle managers. This time face-to-face meetings were arranged so that firsthand feedback is received. In all the data collections i.e. data 1, 2 and 3, the interviewed middle managers were mostly new than in the previous group of middle managers. However, there were middle managers who were involved in more than one data collections. It would be nice to include data 1 managers in data 3 but they were not available for preferred face-to-face meetings. Moreover, they have already discussed in detail about the situation also giving recommendations.

The mentioned proposal contain too many elements that could be made concise based on relevance to three components of the thesis i.e. middle manager, thriving and continuous change. It is proposed as a future step to arrange a work shop of carefully selected middle managers that come up with the weighted and most relevant elements to above mentioned three components of thesis.

7.3.1 Outcome vs Objective

The objective of thesis was to propose guidelines for middle managers for thriving amid continuous change. The outcome is a proposal of guidelines based on best practice for middle managers for thriving amid continuous change, as shown in section 6.3. The outcome is thus found congruent to what was promised in the objective.

7.3.2 Reliability and Validity

Validity relates to the degree or measure of what the study was supposed to measure. Validity is ensured in this study by clearly defining the objective of the study and selecting the appropriate and suitable tools for conducting the study. Key stakeholders i.e. middle managers were interviewed. As many as 16 different managers were interviewed. They were involved in the current state analysis, proposal building and validation stages. In this way, their engagement and feedback increased the validity of the study.

Reliability of the study means the degree to which stable and consistent results are produced and could be repeatable. However, due to qualitative nature of this research, it is less likely that the same outcome will come up even if the same procedure of interviews is followed, due to the change in time and environment. The replies from the managers were often based on their work context and the situation in the company. Therefore, the working condition of mangers were not considered. It is done since there could be multiple scenarios in which the middle managers are working. The working conditions and nature of work are quite diverse in each manager case.

To ensure reliability, an element of trustworthiness is thus established throughout the thesis, especially in data collection where interviewees' profiles are mentioned. Consistency in data collection phase is also established. It is done through conducting many interviews where some repeated and re-enforced opinions were also found. Although some bias could be present in some manger's replies. For example, it is sometime observed that the interviewees did not differentiated between continuous change and one change initiative in their company or industry. Their opinions were sometime based on one change initiative in their company that was affecting them in one way or another.

7.4 Closing words

The rationale of conducting this study was not having any available best practice for middle managers facing continuous change. The existing knowledge was scant and scattered. This thesis has contributed in making a set of guidelines from such scattered material. Furthermore, the middle managers were included in proposal building and validation for co-creation and value addition of the guidelines. Therefore, this thesis could serve provide help to middle managers as it is associated with their individual growth and well-

being. The thesis could also serve well for companies as companies are always interested in productivity and wellbeing of their employees. The proposal that this thesis suggest is the change of mindset and obtaining new skills and behaviors for thriving in continuous change.

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Appendix 1.

Summary of interviews in Data 1

1. **What kind of changes are happening in the industry and society? Are they continuous and simultaneous as well?**
   a) **Informant 1**: Markets are continuously evolving thus companies have to adapt to these changes.
   b) **Informant 1**: People are switching jobs at faster phases and thus companies have to this by better resource planning and competence management
   c) **Informant 2** : Outsourcing of IT services. Re-structuring and M&A cause the organization to opt for outsource IT services.
   d) **Informant 2 i**: Trying out different things is necessary for survival and creating value. This is continuously done. Pricing experimentations are continuously done.
   e) **Informant 3** : Continuous technological and business changes. Big global players involved. Demands of customers. Uncertainty of value creation from the technologies.
   f) **Informant 4** : Rapid transformation of technology, New laws and regulations regarding environment and emission cause changes to Car rental industry.
   g) **Informant 4** : Customers' needs and demands are changing shaping company' s offerings
   h) **Informant 5** : Company is getting less and less order after financial crisis in 2008. Competitors are doing fine in Western market. Company has to adjust pricing, products and strategies because of this. Big organizational changes to responded efficiently to customers are taking place. IT infrastructure, products themselves are improving.
   i) **Informant 5** : Now, less growth than past. Restructuring the operations by building centralized Europe based service centre. Work will shift to that centre, layoffs as a result. Changes in purchasing, IT and HR as a result of this.
   j) **Informant 6**: In industry where ABB is working, constant changes happening. From 2008 financial crisis, our company has getting less and less orders and simultaneously competitors in Asia are performing better in Western market. Consequently we have to adapt to our products and pricing and strategies and all that to survive in this competitive environment. And, first thing as you can see is that we are global company 150 countries, we should be agile as possible but with the complexity of the organizations it is not always possible. Organizational changes are continuously happening, quite big changes are going on in our organizations even locally in Helsinki as well. We are arranging our work to respond more efficiently to our customer's needs. And, simultaneously there is IT infrastructure development that we use for creating value for our customers. And, of course the products themselves are improving for example traditional motors from ABB are going through inventions /innovations to try new solutions to correspond with the market needs. Changes are going for sure.
   k) **Informant 7** : Global economy causing changes inside the company and industry. Company behave differently in bad times, more concerned about the internal process fine tuning and improvements.
   l) **Informant 8** : Layoffs, restructuring in organization. Company looking for best model for organization.

m) **Informant 9,** Global market, economic situation affected traditional industries such as machine, mining and paper and pulp. Due to exports orientation of these industry, global economy hit them badly.

n) **Informant 10** : People continuously switching jobs taking with them the knowledge due to poor documentation.

(2) What is the type of change, major, medium or small change? Can you define what each change type means?

a. **Informant 1**: Major changes in the market of oil. Companies have to adapt to the new situation. In Labour market …medium changes, unemployment increasing, job switch, companies have to train workforce at faster pace.

b. **Informant 2**: Major changes in IT service management business.

c. **Informant 3**: major in IT service management. On large scale, balance has shifted who is producing the services. Shifted the industry.

d. **Informant 3**: major changes in indoor locations. Because of new technology ena-bling new businesses.

e. **Informant 5**: Major changes globally. When they are locally affecting us they are from medium to large.

f. **Informant 6**: It depends on change in ABB's case. Organizational changes are major as they are gross root level. Continuous improvement program going on

g. **Informant 8**: medium in fire protections systems in marine industry. People getting completely different jobs descriptions. Nothing drastic changed.

h. **Informant 8**: Minor changes, small tweaks in processes

i. **Informant 9:** major changes in traditional Finnish industries as the dependence on global markets due to exports

j. **Informant 10**: medium level in software industry. When product developer leaves them major change.

3. **How continuous change is affecting you? And, how much? I see continuous change mainly as a positive thing.**

a. **Informant 1:** Workforce is getting more innovative and adaptive, when they face continuous change. As long as the changes are not too sudden and radical, people seem to adapt to changes rather well. Changing in e.g. IT-systems may cause larger issues than for example changes in the market place. Therefore training peo-ple for adapting changes is important besides implementing change management practices.

b. **Informant 2:** Our Company could not be before this change into existence. Market for small companies emerged. Very fastly adapt to the changes and provide. As a manager, in small company, CEO is a full time manager and rest of us do manage-ment at site. A lot of projects going on, and the situation of our customers (clients) affect us and we need to be aware of the situation. We need to understand our customers, what they are speaking right now.

c. **Informant 3**: You need to stay up to date, you need to continuously look what is going on and process the information what is going on, is there something your company can benefits, can you find places in the market. To create new technology

out of available options. I have to see as a manager, what competences we have, should we acquire new ones.

d. **Informant 4**: Sometimes it was stressful because of lack of communication in the company about the change. No straightforward process flow of information in the company. All the people above you communicate in their own way what to do. Its difficult situation. Because as a person you have your own process flow, at the end CEO come and tell okay do it this way. This is annoying and tiresome situation. You can't focus on the work. Information is scattered and not updated and not dealing with the daily tasks. Frustrating situation..

e. **Informant 4**: We need to be aware of the business outside our company. Understand customers.

f. **Informant 5**: Affecting us in a way that we have already been planning and investigating that we kind of work will go from us to centre. Larger study next fall. People will come and audit our work, how we are doing our work and then they are deciding what are the transactional work going or staying here. Obviously, when work leaves then need for staff also decrease. That kind of risks. Working spirit suffers from that as well. We do not know what exactly is happening in detail. Positive thing is that we are getting rid of some mirror work.

g. **Informant 6:** Mentally affecting at the moment. Less clear situation at the moment.

h. **Informant 6:** Affecting heavily to my daily work. Organizational changes raise process question, to which department I need to contact and who is the responsible person. Who has the ownership of the product? IT solutions impact, how practical it is to use or how easy it is.

i. **Informant 7:** In case of major changes within the company, directions are well communicated so it is easy. But, in medium and small changes case, the hostile atmosphere cause stress. People attitude of higher management is not flexible. Asking for quick adaptability giving less time (strict timetable to adapt)…some time it is not possible to adapt. Some department adapts to changes some even took 18 months …tells about resistance of change in those departments.

j. **Informant 8**: Job description changes every now and then. More people more work

k. **Informant 9:** In general for small companies, current situation of large companies opens more doors as they are now looking for cheaper solutions.

l. **Informant 10:** When people leave, other person has to do his work besides your own work and this cause stress. Stressful for whole team

4. **Do you as a middle manager have strategy to deal with these changes? How you deal with them?**

a) **Informant 1**: I have not created a specific strategy to face the continuous change. But when making changes in e.g. processes, ways of working or IT-systems, I see that creating a change strategy is important.

b) **Informant 2**: trying to know what is going on, bold and trust ourselves that we will be able to do this as the projects are long from two months to six months. Develop ourselves and confidence that we will pull it out. We are able to do technical development at a fast pace from few days to few weeks. At the start of project before doing it, what is feasible, what skills it requires, and in this time we can complete it. A lot of communication with R&D to prioritize a lot. Seeing the big picture but at the same time doing it very fast. Two things to see as far

as possible and then knowing what need to happen and then having the capability to do change necessary. Personal level work systematically, keep things visible what I need to do and communicate with the team. Everyone need to know what happens. Transparency

c) **Informant 3**: no because we are relatively small company not a big company. Less than 100 . it would be an overhead to hire people to develop strategy or we don't feel the need to develop strategy. We just pay attentions around, what is going on and try to collect all possible information also because the industry in which we are competing in requires that contact to each other. But, we do have our company's strategy where we want to be. Because without strategy it's a risk to waste the resources which are valuable. With respect to change, we cannot take every change into action but only those which are closer to us …indoor location is a big market and new players are also coming…we could not be everywhere. We look at changes to get an idea where the technology is going but then as a strategy we look at them which are closer to our core competences. Because if those are outside from our core competences then we have to acquire those core competences as well and need to develop strategy for acquiring those. That's much more complex

d) **Informant 4**: regardless of how my managers are annoyed, I always asked and gathered information and then did what I felt right. Error margin was short. Activeness from MM to ask instead of jumping into the conclusion. Find the solution at least. Own decisions …maybe right one

e) **Informant 5**: restructuring …global changes happening in the company. Local changes in purchasing in abb. No certain recognized strategy to deal with the changes. I try to do be involved in the situation from start (boss try to involve and inform as soon as possible)and tell others about what is coming in aloud even on my own risk…bit more rather than bit less. because in any way it is creating uncertainty that some changes are coming about which we don't now. Bit more honest and tell others that this and this is going to happen, try to smoothen it. Not to create some much stress about it that these are not too serious as they sound.

f) **Informant 6**: not that I know. I just try to adapt as easy as possible. If it is coming from up then I can do very little about it. Accept it and try to practice new process, software etc. as smoothly as possible to support my work.

g) **Informant 7**: not individual clear strategy, no special strategy. training for some changes are provided but how training is presented and change implemented that makes it easy to middle managers to implement.

h) **Informant 8**: No, not thought about . I have to change.

i) **Informant 10**: A month notice to company before leaving or four months, people don't tell the company before they get assurance from next job. They protect their own interest.

5. **What skills are required for middle managers to successfully deal with these changes? Do you feel that you have enough skill sets to deal with the changes? What skills are missing?**

a) **Informant 1**: I think it is important that middle managers have done courses in change management and they are familiar about the practices used in change

management. It is important to try to understand the change from the subordinates' position, by asking yourself "how would I feel about this change if I would be in their position?". It is very important to plan the change carefully and involve the people early on. If you get your subordinates to feel that they have been creating the change with you, it will be much easier for them to adapt the change.

b) **Informant 2**: strategically and tactically. Answered already.

c) **Informant 3**: its difficult to define success here. Do I successfully deal with the changes right now, I don't know it right now. Difficult to tell that. For skills, I think you need to have are those which you are learning in your course right now. To really make analysis what is going on and then to try to make strategy based on how the changes are affecting. Its difficult to tell there is specific skill to have to manage changes successfully. Open mind, flexible otherwise it would be difficult to accept the changes. Try to use as many facts as possible analytical, structural, these are the tools you need. There are quite many changes going on and if you start looking to everything with same view then it becomes very difficult to manage small company. You need to quickly access is this is relevant what we are doing …and then make a recommendations to executives that this is the thing we are looking into. You should have structural way of looking things. Do I have enough competencies, basic management skill…quickly analyze and make recommendation.

d) **Informant 4**: no skills provided by the company. Gather information from internet and courage to ask, initiative. People develop the skills when they were forced to the situation. Assertiveness or being activeness. Interest in the matter, you genuinely care about what you are doing.

e) **Informant 5**: good communication skills. How to tell it to whole department. It requires good stress tolerance and calm nervous that you are not making too hasty assumptions to loose your control. You have to be patient and wait what is coming. Try to communicate what is coming as possible.

f) **Informant 6:** flexible, it is must. If you are flexible then everything start building on that. Different side of your personality. real me and then there is working personality they may not be on the same level. You need to take it as given and then see how it reflect to your work and how you need to change to fit in the work.

g) **Informant 7**: adaptability, flexibility to different situations and people. understanding and listening to all ideas and comments. not all changes are good and positive but MM should adapt.

h) **Informant 8**: Patience. Able to see further than tomorrow. Longer scope. Generate some ideas and prepare. Otherwise if sit and wait as they arrive and you will react will make it hectic and stressful. Courage to accept the change and adapt to it accordingly

i) **Informant 10**: Keep your eyes open. Talk to them encourage them that if they tell about their leaving company will not do anything bad to them. Instead, company will be able to in better position to plan and manage the resources by conducting interviews. Therefore, Work place should be open, trust, confidence to employee

6. **What are the challenges in implementing the solutions to these changes?**

a) **Informant 1**: It is difficult to make changes that are considering the whole organization (like changes in IT-systems), because you cannot get everyone involved in the early stage. But in these cases it is important to create quick winnings and get the "influencers or early adapters" involved early on, so that they can create more accepting atmosphere.

b) **Informant 2**: ability to keep cool head. No one is going to die. When a lot of things happening it is easy to get lost. Ability to formulate action plan. Hard part is to get everyone on-board. Synchronize with others. Some people require constant reminders other require only once. Remind yourself that People are different.

c) **Informant 3**: resistance to changes or people expect you to answer all the questions which is clearly not possible. Not a big company, maybe that's why easier to adapt to change. Common challenges that you face in change management.

d) **Informant 4**: no one believes on your judgement unless you have shown them. You have to convince your superior, convincing power, effective communication power to express yourself and your idea. They wanted to know first the idea is working and then they will allow.

e) **Informant 5**: internal resistance.

f) **Informant 7**: timetable to adapt change is not realistic. resources from other team , training, new software and other support …clear nominated persons where MM could go for easy and hard situations to discuss and contact them

g) **Informant 8**: challenge comes from people themselves. Change resistance ..sometimes factual and sometimes made up , covered. Resource and money could be arranged

h) **Informant 10**: Level of trust between employee and employer. Open and friendly environment by manager to employee

7. Does your company has change management strategy for certain planned changes and for continuous change?

a) **Informant 1**: Yes we do for both. For continuous change the strategy is created by the human resources organization.

b) **Informant 2**: no

c) **Informant 2**: changes are intangible things happening continuously and constantly. different forces are pull at you. Blocking other actions. You should have integrity to say okay let's make this happen and then see the effect. Improve this one thing and then other thing. Try to articulate the intangible thing so that we are able to do them so that's the hard part.

d) **Informant 3**: yes, but not written. Boss in her mind has change management strategy. Follow change management practices. Communicating a lot and getting people on board. Team structure changes handled successfully by clearly communicating the reasons of change well in advance. For continuous change ..no . continuous improvements happening continuously.

e) **Informant 4**: not really.

f) **Informant 5**: we don't have it at the first point but as the change happen we try to build it. So, we are as ready as possible to respond to change. Its possible that company have it at higher level. I don't know about it.

g) **Informant 7**: don't know, not aware of the strategy. departments have some …

h) **Informant 8**: no idea. Maybe company have…

i) **Informant 10**:Yes, in small software companies we do have strategy for such change management by contacting the recruiters for hourly based employees.

Lean management mean one person is doing all the tasks, he is CEO, manager and founder.

8. **Are Middle managers part of the change management strategy design and implementation?**

a) **Informant 1**: yes they are.

b) **Informant 2**: thought very well for large organization but for flat organization . middle manager is also senior manger so we as a small company yes, middle managers are part of the strategy design ..lean and flat organization

c) **Informant 3**: no change management policy. Gut feeling. Discussion to do it better

d) **Informant 4**: not included

e) **Informant 5**: yes, they include. Boss previous participated in on-going change and later became implementation manager to change.

f) **Informant 7**: sometimes, was part of team for update service process. manager asked can you participate to this change management.

g) **Informant 8**: no, not have seen . corporate culture is different

h) **Informant 10**: No other is asked

9. **Do you face pressure/stress or discomfort with the pace of changes? Are they affecting you in your working or in social life or family life in any way? In which way?**

a) **Informant 1**: I do not feel very much pressure or stress about changes. But I am quite adaptive person in general. I do sometimes feel worried about how the subordinates will accept the changes, but most of the time these changes have been prepared well and are in the end well accepted.

b) **Informant 2**: I tackle uncertainty by doing things. It is not always clear what should be done or what can be done. And not having a system for change, but how is not clear. So, what I do is I start doing something according to my vision and that results in conflicts easily. Sometime also it is better to let other voice their opinion but that also create uncertainty. Conflict part of this situation is hardest to tackle. Finding your place when everyone want to participate in the change process. You have your own way of reacting and other people have their own way of reacting. Conflict is positive as it leads to somewhere. It is inevitable as well. Some time I bystander…

c) **Informant 3**: good amount of stress is healthy. I do have stress. More than that it is more excitement to learning and doing new things. Yes, depression and stress is there. No effect on personal life.

d) **Informant 4**: gradual process. Not felt the change. Amount of work increased. No real effect. Stress because of customer dealing. Heavy work load. Company grew but employee or work force did not grew so this caused employee work

e) **Informant 5**: stress, discomfort is caused. Uncertainty and fear of losing job is main stress. What will happen next year? For aged 50 years workers it is become difficult to get job. In work, stress is caused. It's unknown about their performance but certainly they are not happy to come to work.

f) **Informant 6**: Stress caused

g) **Informant 7**: timetable cause pressure. MM are doing their daily routine work and are overloaded, trying to meet deadlines and then change comes with short timetable (or, notice) to manage it.

h)   **Informant 8**: Discomfort faced. Or pressure. Job is on line but not life or family life. Over working affect somehow family life but am happy to go home late

i)   **Informant 10**: family life is affected. Time invested on this. Sacrificed. Bad effect on health. Workaholic

10. Do you get help from your company in this situation? If yes, then how? Are bosses aware of the situation of middle managers?

a)   **Informant 1**: We do get assistance if necessary. E.g. we can take courses in change management or get assistance from consultants if necessary.

b)   **Informant 2**: no help. Depends on personal chemistry. Not systematic. Not specifically stated. People are left out if they don't ask questions.

c)   **Informant 3**: not like a pyramid hierarchy as it is small. Open relationship…asking help is easy. I go and ask ohh I need help. This is the situation what do you think … advice or different prospective. Company related issues.

d)   **Informant 4**: evening shift was busiest shift. At four o clock everyone leaves. They did not bother that someone was doing more work. No team work. It was terrible. Lead to many misunderstandings and arguments.

e)   **Informant 5**: aware of it. They know when they announce about the change. Its pretty much middle managers problem how to deal with it. No help from top management. Local management helps at least mental support. Informative videos are sent on intranet about the program what is happening at. Several Info sessions are held about the change, how it is progressing, what is happening and what is the estimated time to complete. Monthly and quarterly meetings in department level about change.

f)   **Informant 6**: amount of information in big changes are usually coming quite well. Help is given provided you ask for that. Immediate boss quite often answers queries or he find out the answers for you. Open communication forum would be better. Better Sharing information. And flexible.

g)   **Informant 7**: there are supporting teams which can help you but they themselves are overloaded and could not help always, or as fast as wanted, supporting teams could not realize the situation of MMs.

h)   **Informant 8**: aware. it depends on person from whom you ask for help. Not defined persons. Supervisors are helpful but little from HR etc.

i)   **Informant 10**: Depends on person… manager, CEO. If boss is merciful then there would be no work in the company. Generally not much help. If you communicate well.. depending on trust level… you may get help.

11. What is it like to deal with the continuous change at the same time?

a)   **Informant 1**: Continuous change is something more long term and almost automatic whereas changes in for example IT-systems are handled more like projects. So I don't see them influencing too much to each other.

b)   **Informant 2**: we do projects and we acknowledge improvements and next time we do project we do it slightly different. Standardize process is applied and improvements are applied later on.

c)   **Informant 3**: part of work. It depends on the impact of change. Some times it affect directly.

d)   **Informant 4**: left the routine and try to adapt the new one. Because it was top management's decision.

e) **Informant 5**: we work normally or have to. Some kind of timetable is issued telling during these and these time this and this is going to change.

f) **Informant 6**: some of the changes are part of my routine work but some are not. When the big change coming some smaller changes of course coming to work and it increases stress and discomfort. It's up to a person to deal with the changes, leave routine work and deal with the change first or vice versa. usually the changes are Partly they are volunteering things to do. In a sense they are nice because they give more content to your work

g) **Informant 7**: ----

h) **Informant 8**: Adapt. Routine job. It was always like that so normal thing

i) **Informant 10**: professional…with reason…no personal bias/prejudice.

12. What are the strength and weaknesses of continuous change management?

a) **Informant 1**: Managing change is important and necessary in many situations. Managing the continuous change is as important, but in my opinion happens somewhat differently. It is important in both cases to involve people early on, to increase the "buy-in".

b) **Informant 2**: economic and political situation affected almost all the industries and they are improving themselves.

c) **Informant 3**: no answer

d) **Informant 4**: change that came was based on current laws, ideas which could benefit the company and not the employee.

e) **Informant 5**: we don't have a routine for changes in our company. Information is shared in bad way. Administration doesn't know how to and when share the information. Rough way. When people at ground level complain about it they are shut up. Not good enough change management. No routine for change because company previously was in a positive situation only growth was happening in the last ten years. When the need of new people emerged they were hired…everything was nice. So, the things started getting bad they don't know how to deal with it now and handle people. Strength: management has the courage to start these changes. There were too many management resistance but now we see changes. Top management people were also lay-offed if they are not going to work on that change. So, top management is really determined to make the change.

f) **Informant 6**: big company so it is openness. In early stage of change it is hard to get a reliable information about change. What is actually going to be. I don't know that upper management consider it a necessity or not but of course people are curious to know what is going to happen. The earlier the people are included probably their voice could be better heard and it might have positive impact on the change. Weakness: follow up of the implementation is perhaps. Even though we make some changes and we establish new working practices we don't keep up monitoring them, how these new practices have performed or what adjustments they need. This could be done better in the future.

g) **Informant 7**: strength is that company is always want to develop ways of working. Weakness: is not enough help is provided to MMs for change adaptability.

h) **Informant 8** : don't know ..not common

i) **Informant 10**: Continuous hiring-less stress, production not suffer, less cost as in this way only one month low production is beared. Time saving, manager can save himself. Weakness: cost money, time to manage whole thing, advertisement

cost, interviews cost and time. Many interviews and no call in this way loose trust of good people. Then your company becomes not first option for the bright talent.

13. **Do you think these changes are only limited to your industry or they are prevalent in other industries as well.**
   a)   **Informant 1**: I believe many other industries are facing similar changes.
   b)   **Informant 2**: I enjoy the situation. I initiate change. I thrive on change. Eagerness to improve. Stability to some extent but not like ole factories like stability. Industries have become short sighted due to economic conditions and are not looking too far in the future. 24:00
   c)   **Informant 3**: privacy concerns will be changes that will affects. Things getting more than from one particular segment of society and company. Things retail, advertisement and health care will all change. Government influence will increase.
   d)   **Informant 5:** Definitely happening even in some companies happening largely than our company. Oil industry is going through huge changes. 2 M PEOPLE are layed off from steel industry ..there is over capacity everywhere. Mining industry is even suffering more. Electronics and energy sector doing little fine as energy consumption still growing, still more stable and profitable business than mining and oil industries.
   e)   **Informant 6**:Happening in big companies. Changes are continuous and they will be needed all the time. Technology is developing all the time and companies subject to its environment as the environment stresses the company and it competitors to shape their offerings and their practices even the IT systems and their sale process. Changes are inevitable.
   f)   **Informant 7**: yes, these are happening generally. as, economic situation is not good so all the competitors are facing the same situation they are fighting for the same customer as whole market is shrinking down. so, company is always want to improve internal issues/processes.
   g)   **Informant 8**: other industries happen. Happening fast.
   h)   **Informant 10**: yes

14. **Do you think that these changes are for short time and will perish in some time in future?**
   (a)   **Informant** 1: No I don't think so. I think continuous change is something that will keep on happening in ever increasing speed and companies have to adapt to this situation. Especially the electronics market will be facing very rapids changes in the market conditions.
   (b)   **Informant** 3: human could benefit from changes—real benefit and economy. Safer for kids etc. some are short terms e.g. which are looking for profit. Market of indoor location just started will last for some time. Business opportunities are there. No one standard technology yet. Legislation challenges he customers' needs.
   (c)   **Informant** 5: They will keep on going. We have 2030 strategy. Minor changes, adjustments or improvements will keep happening. Maybe some stakeholder undergo major changes and affect us. Change is continuous phase and we are all the time changing. We should be in that kind of mode where small changes are all time happening other than big changes. Small improvements.

(d) **Informant** 6: continuous improvement to projects. Some follow ups happen.

(e) **Informant 7**: these changes will stay. Companies could not operate with the 30 years old strategy. customers buying habits are changed. companies should be more aware from the trends. they should know that whether the change is short term or medium term. but, also companies are unaware about the future. all they can do is to fine tune their internal processes. also, see about external. provide better to customers in order to compete with the customers by knowing

(f) **Informant** 8: it would be happening …restructuring want to find stable setup…lower level pressure in future.

(g) **Informant 10**: will go on. Organized strategy needed for the continuous leaving of manpower in software industry. That would be very helpful.

Appendix 2.

Transcript of interviews in Data 2

Inform-ant ID	Q1: *Present way of working: How do you currently handle continuous change?*	Q2: *Desired state: How would you want to handle continuous change? (based on what you've read, heard and seen other people do)*	Q3: *Based on your experience and knowledge: what are your recommendations on how to cope with and thrive in an environment of continuous change.*
1	At the moment, I'm in a position where continuous change is taking a huge amount of our capacity. Department's free capacity is almost used to daily operations and handling the change could wreck the whole system. The way I'm keeping things in hands, is to give clear roles and responsibilities to personnel and follow the progress on weekly basis. Basically, I'm giving them free hands. I prefer to hunt the root cause of things. Usually, change is about correcting something that is wrong or there has happened a mistake what has to be corrected. To eliminate the "negative change", I'm spending my time to correct the root cause, not to patch the symptoms. That has worked so far and in the end, all the old issues have been fixed. With new issues (parts, assemblies, RFQ's etc), I'm doing them properly so they are thoroughly executed to minimize errors. I've noticed that an hour spent well pays back with two hours of free time. (<-- you can quote on that)	Like said earlier, do things properly, it saves time. Organizations should also build a protocol what to follow. For example, designing new products, there are reviews where all the stakeholders are present. Tackle the issues before they happen, then the change becomes positive. Fixing errors is expensive and reduces quality and eats your brand. In a nutshell: build that kind of rules and regulations that when you follow them, you won't make mistakes.	It starts with recruiting. There are people that don't like change. They just aren't familiar with that even there are rules and regulations. You have to find the right people, give them goals, follow the progress and review. Build protocols and ensure that everybody is following them. Organization has processes, break them into parts and milestones. At every milestone, stop and think what you have done and correct if necessary. Proceed when you are ready. If there's no time to stop, the change is uncontrollable. By protocols, I don't mean strict hierarchical bureaucracy, just milestones in important phases of the process.
2	I would say that for me the current method for handling the continuous change is mostly by trying to manage with it. If a new change has been introduced or requested I typically try to allow some time to digest the information and form a systemic view in order to understand what is behind	In order to handle continuous change I want to turn focus more on leading instead of managing. By this I mean being part of leading myself, team, co-workers or customers to prepare for the future changes. For this I believe one of the keys being developing the view and readiness that is adaptive for the futures knowledge and changes. All changes cannot be prepared	Some recommendations which are based on the gained knowledge from theory as well as from practice. Think about your thinking. Our way of thinking is affected by several cognitive biases which impact on the way we experience things such as change and how we form our decisions. By acknowledging some of these

	the change, where could it lead to and how to get there. I've noticed that regarding the first impressions our thoughts are often biased. The problem is that as the changes either often are seemingly implemented or requested in fast pace there may not always be adequate time for coping with the change. Furthermore this has an impact on the decisions made on the base of the change or the way I communicate with others regarding the change.	in advance and all changes are not necessarily good, but by preparing and leading the change we may reduce the uncertainty and randomness and be more adaptive for the change.	might help on preparing for the changes and building heuristics for coping with the change. Try to see also the systemic perspective. We may need to improve the processes to be more efficient, but in the end process is just guidance for reaching the end result only in most of the cases and only in relation of the specific process. If you understand the systemic view you may be able to be more adaptive specifically in case of sudden or unexpected changes and gain more understanding on the impact of the changes in system level. Utilize methods for futures knowledge creation. This can improve the foresight and readiness for the changes. For example co-creation, cross-functional knowledge sharing and eliciting future requirements.
3	I think this is more or less like a questions of attitude. It takes some time to learn to live in constant change, when the attitude is okay, its much easier to handle any change. I foster an attitude that is more like prepared to facing next upcoming change rather than being surprised when it occurs. In other words, I do not consider the current state as permanent status.	If comparing to my current ability to face any change, I'd like to improve the way I anticipate any change. This might help me to prepare facing the change even better.	I would say, everything starts inside a person and this is part of self-development. The attitude must be okay with continuous change, it's better to learn off the idea that an environment would be somehow in a permanent status. When a change occurs, its better to absorb it right away and avoid to take any possible consequences of a change too personally. We have had a lot of changes in past years in my workplace, and I made one observation among people who thrive in an change. This is to avoid trying to prevent a change or complaining about it. Some people willingly complain any possible consequences of a change and try to advocate of negative impact of a change. Eventually they euther adopt in to a change or leave, this is the hardest way.
4	Keep a cool head and a clear picture of what the overall strategy is, what is expected of you and what you need to do. This gives you a view of what you	They use their time wisely and have developed a keen sense for knowing when a change requires immediate action and when not.	I would be even more strict with how I make my time available to others. I would also demand more of changes: clear communication of the plan, predefined

	need to do and what not. Manage your own time, don't let others do it by swamping you with their meetings, etc.		check-points and communication when a change processes has been halted
5	Currently, I try to tackle continues change by doing my homework and actively studying new technological changes.	I would like to handle it so that I would have time for. Enough time and resources for it. And of course I would like to find stable state so that the change is not continues. I think there is Only handful of people who actually can be and/or like to be in the environment where continues change is occurring.	To be able to work and cope in such environment one must be able to build their own way to adapt the continues change to their everyday work. One must have enough mental strength and willingness to feel comfortable in a such environment.
6	Many Finnish companies do not proactively deal with continuous change. The company culture and mindset is often reactive and innovation is considered as "play time" as there is no perceived urgency. Many companies say that they are creative and innovative but my observation is that they are not. Most companies focus on operational issues and if they innovate it incremental (small improvements on existing offerings). So in short: Very few do.	With my services I strive to implement and execute systematic innovation processes at my clients. Innovation is a business process that continuously updates the companies "readiness" for the future and should therefore be executed like a standard (forward looking) business process (just like accounting). That will create an idea / opportunity funnel from which regularly new business opportunities will find their way to the market. Most ideas will not make it and often that is considered as a failure rather then what is actually is: a learning experience. (John Kay's book 'Obliquity' is a good read on that)	Basically people and the way you manage them. If you are familiar with MBTI personality typing you know that about 74% of the population are Sensing (living in the here-and-now, fact based, valuing past experiences, loyal, hierarchy focused, natural rule followers) and about 26% are intuitive people. Intuitives are future focused, they are drawn to idea/concept/theories, they are comfortable with uncertainty and often they are natural leaders and have a higher intelligence. We need all types of personalities as a society to survive. But when it comes to entrepreneurship and innovation intuitive people need to be able to step more to the foreground and "do their thing" and not be held back by rules/processes/procedures/administration. To many managers nowadays are xSTJ's. They are good managers (to keep existing processes going) but lousy leaders and even worse innovators. We need to get the right people (personality types) in the right places when it comes to innovation and entrepreneurship.