differences or group effects for example?). But they do at least provide useful frameworks for evaluating the appropriateness of change management strategies that are typically adopted.

The role of the change agent

Last but not least, all of the models presented above signal up in one way or other the importance of the change agent. Change agents may be internal (in the case of senior managers), external (in the case of consultants) or some combination.

Some approaches (e.g. OD) rely very heavily on external change agents and this has the distinct advantage that it brings with it a fresh perspective on organizational problems and, with it, alternative knowledge and expertise. Whether or not this means greater objectivity is, of course, debatable as consultants have their own commercial interests and will also be employed for a specific purpose by management. What is undeniable, however, is that they can be used to help foster greater perceptions of objectivity and so enhance the legitimacy of the change process. In some instances, they may even be used quite explicitly for that purpose.

Internal change agents, who will be more embedded in the organization (and perhaps seen as less objective) will depend for their legitimacy on the commitment and support of top management (assuming that top management are not the change agents). Research on the skills required by internal change agents consistently emphasizes the importance of this support, together with the individual(s) being accepted and trusted, seen as credible, sensitive and people-oriented. Rosabeth Kanter distills these attributes of any change agent ‘person specification’ into three principal elements: analytical skills, participative skills and power skills. Again, we see here the importance of recognizing how politically charged change management can be and how it becomes important to understand how the processes of change inter-connect with the internal social and political context of change.
Activity Twelve

Read Buchanan and Huczynski, pp 572-9 and 582-3 for an overview and evaluation of these change management models. Use these models to apply to recent changes introduced within your own organization (include the n-step recipes and OD models, if appropriate). Identify the change management strategy or strategies adopted and evaluate their appropriateness to the situation and their relative success. Did strategies match the situation well and were all appropriate steps or stages followed? How change agents were used (if applicable) and how well were they used? Are there any lessons to be learned from applying these models for future change management? Again, compare and contrast your experiences with other members of the group on Blackboard.

On reflection

This final section of the OB part of the PMO unit has attempted to provide an overview of some of the major issues associated with managing organizational change, focusing on the complexities of organizational change, perspectives on planned organizational change, the different strategies available for introducing change and the role of the change agent. The key messages that should emerge are:

1. that organizational change is complex in its causes and disruptive in the effects it can have (both intended and unintended) due to inter-connections within the organization

2. that change can be emergent or planned and that planned change involves understanding how the organizational context enables or restrains change

3. that different change management strategies and tactics may have different effects and be suited to different circumstances

4. that the management of change is as much a political process as it is a process of being analytical and involving people in the process