Innovative and Emerging OD Practices in the UK

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In 1978, French and Bell said

Enormous opportunity and potential exist for the OD movement in the future. Organizations throughout the world need the unique help that can be provided by highly trained interventionist using people-oriented action research approaches. The future of OD is bright, as long as the high-quality hard work of the past continues.

... What is OD all about? OD is about people helping each other to unleash the human spirit and human capability in the work place. (1978, p. 333)

After 34 years, that utterance remains true:
1. Enormous opportunity and potential still exist for the OD movement in work places worldwide.
2. OD will remain relevant as long as we have hard working, high quality, and trained OD practitioners.
3. The core of OD – to unleash the human spirit and human capability in the work place still remains our calling.

The continuous rise of OD practitioners in the North, South, East, and West is testimony to the type of help organizational leaders require to stay vibrant in the current context. The time has come for OD practitioners from all spheres to work together to respond to the global need. It is in this spirit this special issue of the OD Practitioner was shaped for UK practitioners to share how we think and approach the unique type of assistance we offer organizations.

The OD field was born and bred in the United States with significant contributions from members of The Tavistock Institute in the UK. Since then, the US has continued to lead the way in the field while UK Organization Development has languished. In the UK there are very few academic programs, no significant OD professional associations, and a minimal amount of OD publications. However, there are encouraging shifts in the UK scene. Just to name a few: there has been a proliferation of jobs in OD; there are fantastic, eager practitioners who want to learn and grow their practices; and there have been major innovative applications (especially large scale methodology) of OD in the healthcare system. Central and local governments rely on their OD practitioners more and more to engage with both the community they serve and the staff that carry out the work. Some universities have taken the lead to research and teach OD in their academic programs. Business schools have begun to make OD a prominent area of study. The National HR conference has many tracks on OD. We now have an OD practitioners’ continuous development program and an advance OD certificate. There are more and more UK practitioners who have done superb work at the societal and community level, and they have started publishing their experience.

This issue of the ODP highlights a small portion of the pool of talented and committed OD practitioners in the UK. We seek to ensure that all of us who practice OD in UK become a part of a global community of practitioners – to share what we are learning with our worldwide community of colleagues. In that way, we can together construct a bright future for OD as predicted by French and Bell.

The Articles in this Issue
We begin with an innovative approach to dealing with a gap in GlaxoSmithKline’s capability to drive sustainable transformation. Jacqui Alexander and Margaret Huggins describe how they started, scaled up, and began to embed a combination of Lean Six Sigma, Project Management, and OD that they called the Accelerated Delivery Program (ADP) to improve GSK’s way of working. They also highlight the OD theory that informed and contributed to this highly practical initiative and reflect on what they learned as OD practitioners.

Then Jean E. Neumann writes about the professional adjustments she made when she relocated from the US to the UK. She describes her journey from NTL-influenced training and development to her encounter with The Tavistock Institute’s approaches. Using selected critical incidents, she reflects personally on what she has learned about being an OD consultant in the four countries that constitute the UK.

Bridget Farrands describes how her consulting has been shaped by training and OD assignments in both the US and Europe. She illustrates the practice and application of some core Gestalt principles in working with a strategic team, the OD implications of such work, and how the Gestalt concept of figure and ground provides a central creative tension to her organizational work.

Julie Beedon explains how the field of Large Scale Interventions (LSI) has developed in the UK and what practitioners need to pay attention to if they want to use LSIs effectively. She explores the impact and potential of four stories from her own work in the UK that embody the underlying principles at the heart of LSIs.

Useful and pioneering work on developing organizations can be done in an environment where Organization Development has not yet been established or widely recognized as a field of practice. David Roe’s case study demonstrates how to quietly and opportunistically adapt OD-inspired interventions to the needs of an organization, while holding fast to OD practice and its principles of openness, democracy, and learning.

Malcolm L. Hill, a PhD research scientist, and P.F. Pegg Jones, an OD consultant, present a case where data collection, analysis, and metrics were embedded as integral ingredients in a culture change program. The program’s aim was to establish Project Management and High Performing Team practices in the project matrix environment of a multi-discipline, multi-site chemical development division.
Gifford Tanser and Penny Lee demonstrate that any situation of change in an organization can be used as an opportunity to implement effective OD change management and to get an integrated set of benefits that can be harvested in the future. They show how focusing on leadership development, talent development, and talent assessment as part of a succession planning process it is possible to develop an organization’s agility and culture for managing anticipated future change.

Drew Watson and Jonathan Cormack explore the important link between executive development and Organization Development, particularly building leadership capability and cooperation, aligning strategic intent and culture, and tackling real change issues that impact organization performance and effectiveness. They describe the development and current state of their executive development program, Leading the Journey, which is targeted to 150 executives in the most senior positions in Standard Chartered Bank.

In order to create the space needed for building sustainable change in a fast paced consumer industry, Dagmar Daubner and Andreas Priestland combined action research and systems engagement in a process they call the SEARCH approach. They write about how they used this approach to design and implement a worldwide innovative leadership development program for first-line managers in HEINEKEN International.

How can we deliver change with people and culture built into what we do, rather than something to be fixed afterwards, with a backdrop of external criticism that was damaging staff morale and the employee brand, internal feedback from people that are confused, scared, or ambivalent, and a leadership team that wants to do things faster? Carrie Birmingham describes an integrated and multi-system OD process lead by an HR Director, Change Team, Leadership Team, and a dedicated Transformation Director in the commercial unit of News International.

According to Andrea Adams, most CEOs are concerned with two things: how to get their organization to deliver against expectations in the short term, and how to develop the organization so that it is fit for the future. At the same time they have to deal with globalization, the pace and scale of technological developments, demands for greater transparency of leadership, and closer communication with customers and stakeholders. Adams discusses recent research that offers insights into the increasing need for OD expertise among CEOs.

Emily Sweetman and Maxine Gooding present the results of a survey of UK based OD practitioners. They explore the dominant characteristics of the OD field in the UK and Europe; how the practitioners connect with each other and expand their knowledge and practice; trends and shifts in the field; and what needs to be done to continue to develop OD in the UK.

Finally, Gervase Bushe reviews Sarah Lewis’s Positive Psychology at Work: How Positive Leadership and Appreciative Inquiry Create Inspiring Organizations. Lewis’ book offers a practical perspective on positive organization behavior research and models for the practice of good management.

I enjoyed working with these authors and with the ODP editor John Vogelsang. I also want to thank the members of the ODP Editorial Board who have given great support to the authors to help them make their voices clear. I sincerely hope you will enjoy reading about the work UK practitioners have done, some very courageously. May this issue prompt further dialogue among the OD community worldwide.

Mee-Yan Cheung-Judge, PhD
Guest Editor

Reference

Over the past five years we have written a number of articles identifying a bifurcation in Organization Development (OD) practice that is not well recognized in OD books and articles but is alive and well in OD practice. Simply put, we think an increasing number of successful OD practitioners are doing OD in a way that deviates from some basic tenets of the field, most notably, that a “diagnosis” should precede any intervention. By “diagnosis” we mean the act of analyzing a system to find the causes (“facts”) of a problematic situation. This analysis usually involves consultant driven interviews, surveys, observations, and document review, followed by the consultants presenting their results and recommendations to an organizational leadership group in order to develop plans to rectify the problematic situation.

We have titled the alternative approach, “dialogic.” Dialogic does not seek the facts, analysis of the facts, solving a predefined problem per se, nor use of an actual or implied diagnostic model. The metaphor or image of an organization is more that of an ongoing “conversation” and reality does not exist independent of the stories people are contributing and co-creating. Differences are more than different points of view or misperceptions to be corrected by the facts. Differences are alternative realities that mix to generate new possibilities influenced by power and power dynamics. Dialogic OD practitioners do not view words as just a way to convey meaning, but as the creators of meaning. They do not inquire to assess a system against prescriptive models of health, justice, or effectiveness. Instead they view inquiry as a process that creates social reality. We believe many of these OD practices have been influenced by post modern philosophies, social construction, discursive studies, and complex adaptive systems theory.

Familiar examples of Dialogic OD methods are Appreciative Inquiry, Open Space, Conferencing, and World Café. They are familiar because people have written about them. We think there are many more both large and small system innovations out there, especially in the last decade, that have not been written about. The purpose of this call for papers is to invite people to write about these or the above Dialogic methods.

For this special issue of the OD Practitioner we seek papers that advance our understanding of planned change processes that do not rely on data collection and feedback. We are particularly interested in papers that describe innovative, successful change practices, and we are interested in understanding the theoretical models underlying these newer practices. These change practices may include creative combinations of more familiar OD methods. We also invite articles that describe practical theories that can be used by OD practitioners to reflect on their practice and generate new ideas and approaches in OD practice.

Submission Deadline is October 15, 2012.

Articles should be sent to the two special issue editors, Gervase Bushe (bushe@sfu.ca) and Robert J. Marshak (marshak@american.edu), and the ODP editor (jvogelsang@earthlink.net). Submissions should follow the OD Practitioner manuscript submission guidelines (details at www.odnetwork.org). The special issue editors will screen the articles and provide feedback. Final articles will be reviewed by two members of the ODP editorial board.

About the Special Issue Editors

Gervase R. Bushe, PhD, is Professor of Leadership and Organization Development at the Beedie School of Business, Simon Fraser University, in Vancouver. His thirty year consulting practice spans redesigning large organizations, facilitating organizational learning, executive team building, architecting cultural change processes, and designing developmental leadership training. The common theme is creating more collaborative work systems. He can be reached through bushe@sfu.ca.

Robert J. Marshak, PhD, is Senior Scholar in Residence for the MSOD Program at American University, Washington, DC, and maintains a global consulting practice. His current interests include discourse-based change processes and dialogic OD. Marshak is a recipient of the Organization Development Network’s Lifetime Achievement Award. He can be contacted at marshak@american.edu.
“A gap in GSK’s capability to drive sustainable transformation and deliver on the strategy became apparent. Senior GSK executives realised that they needed to improve the company’s ability to ‘execute the strategy brilliantly’—an essential component of this is the ability to effectively manage and implement change.”

A New Prescription for Improving Business Performance at GlaxoSmithKline

By Jacqui Alexander and Margaret Huggins

Introduction

GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) is a global healthcare group, headquartered in London, UK, engaged in the discovery, development, manufacture, and marketing of pharmaceutical products and health-related consumer products (http://www.gsk.com).

In the years following the merger of Glaxo-Wellcome and SmithKline Beecham in 2001, GSK’s approach to change and performance improvement was fragmented and inconsistent across the business units. In 2008, the appointment of a new CEO (Sir Andrew Witty) and rapidly increasing challenges around regulatory issues and drug pricing resulted in new strategic priorities for GSK. A gap in GSK’s capability to drive sustainable transformation and deliver on the strategy became apparent. Senior GSK executives realised that they needed to improve the company’s ability to “execute the strategy brilliantly”—an essential component of this is the ability to effectively manage and implement change.

The realization was simple, GSK needed to change how it changed. The focus of change now needed to be on performance improvement and the chosen approach was the internally developed Accelerated Delivery Program (ADP).

Outline

This article will share how we started, scaled up, and began to embed the ADP performance improvement way of working in GSK between 2009 and 2012. We begin with the background and initial objectives followed by a summary of the journey overall. We will then highlight the OD theory that has informed and contributed to this highly practical initiative along with our metrics for success. We continue with our plans for the future and the general lessons we have learned. We conclude with a prologue in which we reflect on what we learned as OD practitioners. Significant turning points and the overall impact on the Business are illustrated by comments from line leaders and colleagues in GSK.

Background to ADP

In looking for examples of effective execution across the Company, we noticed that:

» in Global Manufacturing and Supply (GMS) Lean Six Sigma was delivering solid, quantifiable business improvements;

» in the Consumer Healthcare business Project Management was noticeably improving the execution of projects;

and

» across the company OD teams were driving higher levels of engagement and effective change programs.

However, none of the 3 disciplines on their own were sufficient to execute GSK’s ambitious strategy. For example, the Lean Six Sigma approach could deliver efficiency and savings, but struggled to affect the predominant mindset through training alone. On the other hand, a purely OD approach ran the risk of ignoring direct, tangible business measures and outcomes in favour of improving capability and behaviours.
Table 1: The Key Phases in the ADP Journey

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<td>Goals</td>
<td>Test the ADP hypothesis by applying it to 10 transformation projects</td>
<td>Apply ADP ways of working to more projects and to whole business units as a way of working</td>
<td>Embed a performance-driven culture within GSK through use of the Fundamentals of Delivery</td>
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<td>Key Activities</td>
<td>• Creation of the GSK Change Framework and identification of OD, Lean Sigma and PM tools</td>
<td>• Delivery of “Beacon” projects to further prove the ADP concepts</td>
<td>• Extend ADP work to Emerging Markets, Asia Pacific, South America, and Africa (moving staff “east”)</td>
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<td>• Definition of Core Principles for Accelerating Change</td>
<td>• GEMBA* visits to see ways of working in GSK sites</td>
<td>• Maintain and improve standard approaches</td>
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<td>• Identification of 10 projects from across GSK business units and countries</td>
<td>• Capability build through Field, Forum, Fieldwork approach</td>
<td>• Adapt ADP ways of working for rapid adoption in non-western geographies</td>
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<td>• Mobilization of 20 OD, Lean Sigma and PM professionals to form the ADP team</td>
<td>• International World Café to apply learning and insight</td>
<td>• Leverage practitioner community to extend capability build</td>
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<td>• Delivery of Project-based consulting, teaching and coaching</td>
<td>• Cross Skilling of OD, Lean Sigma, and PM consultant in ADP team</td>
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<td>• GEMBA visits to see similar ways of working at external companies</td>
<td>• Leaders modelling ADP ways of working</td>
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<td>Milestones</td>
<td>• Project Learning Review to decide whether to proceed with ADP experiment or not</td>
<td>• Definition of the GSK Fundamentals of Delivery</td>
<td>• Definition of ADP Consultant Role (single hybrid role)</td>
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<td>• Investment by early adopter businesses in dedicated ADP resource</td>
<td>• Investment in dedicated ADP consultants by late adopter businesses</td>
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*GEMBA is the Lean Six Sigma term for the work place where value is created.

Nowhere in GSK were all three disciplines being applied in unison. Our hypothesis was simple—would application of the three disciplines together as ADP, have a greater impact?

Journey of ADP

In mid-2009, with the CEO’s sponsorship, a small team was formed to identify some simple approaches drawn from Organization Development (OD), Lean Six Sigma (Lean Sigma) and Project Management (PM). The fusion of these approaches became ADP.

Our objectives were as follows:
- Accelerate delivery of the GSK Strategy
- Embed a structured, disciplined way of working
- Use a pragmatic approach to build skills and capabilities in leadership, change, and project management and continuous improvement
- Embed GSK values and behaviors to deliver excellence

One of the first deliverables of ADP was the GSK Change Framework, which established a common language and a consistent, structured approach to change. By synthesizing the best of the multiple frameworks and models in use in OD, Lean Sigma, and Project Management, e.g., Bridges model (Bridges, 1991), PDCA (Deming,1986), DMAIC (Harry, 1998), Project Management models (PMBOK, 2008) we collaborated to create something that was simple and accessible to leaders and their teams as they underwent business transformation. Both the framework itself, and the way it was developed began to embody the values and intent of ADP. The GSK Change Framework is illustrated in Figure 1 (next page). The Change Framework has proven to be extremely valuable in GSK and has since been rapidly and extensively adopted. It is an enduring and unchanging element and foundation of the ADP approach. Our lesson—simplicity comes from working through complexity.

At the heart of ADP is a set of six core principles for accelerating change:

1. All change starts with self.
2. Active, committed, and visible sponsorship by key stakeholders (at all levels) is imperative.
3. Ensure that simple, time-bound measures tied to financial/business results are defined.
4. Include people who are impacted by change to own and design it.
5. Focus on the few vital things that you can change now.
6. Design fit for purpose solutions that address customer needs, not wants.

Another crucial point in the journey came in February 2010, when the ADP team clarified the targets and key metrics for...
success. A key strategy for scale-up in Phase 2 was the development of an ambitious number of ADP practitioners—individuals from a wide range of occupations across the business who became skilled in ADP ways of working in order to create capability in others. However, by the summer of 2010, we realized that delivery of this practitioner metric was at risk. Modelling our own principles, we ran a 3 day “kaizen” event, soliciting the voice of the customer and using focussed problem solving to identify what we needed to do differently. The output of this work was the GSK Fundamentals of Delivery—a one page definition of a simple and accessible way of working that teams could learn and apply immediately in their daily work. In plain language the “simple sticky stuff” that could improve everyday work, not just strategic projects.

OD Contributions to ADP

OD thinking was key to the design of ADP and the new ways of working—one that embodied action learning (Lewin, 1947; Weisbord, 1987), use of self as consulting instrument (Cheung-Judge, M., 2001; Seashore, et al., 2004), systems thinking (Macintosh & MacLean, 1999), complexity theory (Stacey, 1996), capability building, engagement, and group process (Argyris & Schon, 1974; Schein, 1998), all with a strong focus on improving business performance. We also drew on recent thinking on leadership practices that sustain organizational change (Rowland & Higgs, 2008).

The Main Contributions of OD

» Designing processes to encourage co-construction: for example the GSK Change Framework and the Fundamentals. This collaborative approach involved a broad spectrum of specialists, internal customers, and sponsors in an intensive workshop environment.

» Maximizing the value and challenge of different mindsets: forming a team with different skills and practices from PM, Lean Sigma, and OD. Lean Sigma and PM thinking arguably come from a logical-rational and critical mindset that focuses on problems to be solved. On the other hand, OD comes from an appreciative, socio-emotional mindset that focuses on behavioral and human system change as the key to improvement. Fusing the perspectives together gave us the best of both worlds, but also meant we had to dig deep into our psyche to adjust to thinking both ways.

» Setting a relationship protocol between ADP consultants was significant: the pairs and trios of consultants who were most successful demonstrated a great respect for their peers and a passion for learning one another’s craft. Having an open mind to other expert disciplines was crucial to the success of these partnerships.

» Modelling the change: the
ADP team does not introduce or teach anything that we have not applied to ourselves and integrated into our ways of working (Block, 1988). This gives our consultants credibility in the eyes of our customers—we do not just teach, we apply to “self first” and seek to be a model of the change we wish to see.

» Applying the OD cycle: as the ADP team engaged with the customers, a clear diagnosis of the current state of each project was established as the start of a consulting cycle working around the GSK Change Framework. This defined business problems and opportunities for sustainable improvements—all with a keen eye on value for the external customer and patient.

» Building leadership belief and trust: at the outset GSK leaders were at best, neutral, and at worst, deeply cynical. Small Beacon projects helped to establish proof of concept. Beacon projects were typically found at the front line of the organization, such as the sales force, factory floor, or medicine delivery teams. It seemed that by fusing the disciplines of Lean Sigma and PM that produce hard benefits with the soft benefits of OD in highly visible parts of the business, we were able to get the attention and support of leaders who wanted both.

» Choosing a consulting style that moved from expert to teacher and coach: this is how ADP creates self-sustaining capability in the business that sometimes required a change in mindset. We needed to do careful contracting with internal customers, who initially expected a quick fix and were unwilling to devote time to learning, practicing, and being coached.

» Intervening at the unit of the leader with their team at multiple levels of the system: by intervening at the team level, ADP is applied to a specific problem, resulting in a tangible benefit. The teams are taught and coached so they not only solve their problem but develop the skills to do the same thing again and again, so embedding a new way of working. We found that even working on the most basic disciplines of effective meeting practices has delivered significant benefits to teams in time savings and increased productivity.

» Choosing a teaching and coaching framework to build independence and sustained capability: studies show that to increase retention, adults must experience what they have been taught during training. After
three months, adults retain 70% of what they have been taught if they apply it during training, but they retain only 10% if they do not apply it (McCauley & Van Velsor, 2004). Based on this, we apply a “Forum, Fieldwork, Feedback” approach. In a series of Forum workshops, intact teams are taught the change framework approaches and get to apply them immediately to their real work; in the Fieldwork between workshops they are coached and observed in applying their new found knowledge, providing them with critical feedback.

Metrics

From the early experimental days of 10 projects in 2009, ADP ways of working were applied to over 40 projects in 2010, each of which had clearly quantified business benefits.

The shift for 2011 was to move from projects to application at the Business Unit level; this scale-up was dependent upon developing expertise across all GSK businesses. The early adopter Businesses represent approximately half of the GSK workforce. What sets them apart is they are willing to invest in their own dedicated expertise to accelerate the embedding of this new way of working. A constant eye is maintained on delivery of tangible and quantifiable business benefit, as this is where our credibility continues to be built.

While the central ADP team has never expanded beyond a constant 20 people, by the end of 2012 the number of Business aligned consultants and practitioners will easily outweigh the central team. To date, we have built capability in over 350 expert practitioners who are now teaching and coaching the new ways of working. As a result, over 3,000 people are actively applying the ADP approach in their daily work.

The Future of ADP

The program continues with an ambition of bringing the rigour of ADP to the whole of GSK over the next 3–5 years. It will continue to adapt and evolve, just as it has done in the past 2 years, building on the strong foundation that has already breached the tipping point (Gladwell, 2002, Shapiro & Zigarmi, 2010).

The challenge moving forward is to embed and sustain the new capabilities and continue to realise tangible benefits. To achieve this, we continue to operate a pull-based approach, with no top-down mandates. Once a business unit starts believing the new ways of working deliver results (typically as a result of a one or more beacon projects), they are encouraged to invest in their own (small) team of consultants to establish the new ways of working as the new system.

A challenge we continue to face is the fact that our ADP ways of working were largely developed in the Western world, albeit with moderate successes in Japan and China, so how do we navigate and shape the best solution for GSK’s growth areas of Emerging Markets, Latin America and Asia Pacific? Our initial response to this challenge is to bring talent from the East to the UK and to recruit local staff in these regions to help translate the essence of our work. This dual strategy seems to be working well in this regard.

General Lessons Learned

In the course of our journey in introducing ADP we have learned a number of general lessons, some we hope are new and some may sound familiar.

- Be thoughtful in the choice of projects at the experiment phase: start with projects that are at the edges of your system—where your organization interfaces with its environment and where value is created, for example sales forces, factory floors, product development teams. It is at these edges where the most tangible benefits can be achieved in the shortest timeframe.

- Respond to the opportunities and pull presented by your environment: the first 10 projects were the only work that senior
executives pushed ADP into. From as early as April 2010, the program worked on a pull basis responding to the energy that the business had.

» Align the program with critical business objectives: from the outset, the intent of ADP was defined by our CEO and Corporate Executive Team. Our purpose was aligned to the transformation strategy for the corporation and all endeavours have been focussed on increasing capability to deliver business critical objectives.

» Define a unifying framework to guide the work of a diverse team: by synthesizing the best approaches from OD, Lean Sigma, and Project Management we collaborated early on to create a change framework that was simple and accessible to leaders and teams going through business transformation.

» Recruit the right people onto the team from all 3 disciplines: those who are willing to experiment, fail, and learn. The ADP team has needed to continually adapt and improve to stay fresh and at the leading edge in an external environment that is constantly changing. In its three years of operating it has evolved every 6–9 months; prompted by our deeper enquiry on what will be needed to take the work to the next level.

» Establish a set of core principles to guide the work of the diverse team: establishing and living the six principles of change helps to align the team on an ongoing basis. Agreement at a philosophical level gives practitioners the freedom to apply their skills effectively.

» Define a standard that is good enough and then improve it over time: experts from any discipline are naturally inclined to establish high quality approaches—that is what makes them professional. The paradox faced by ADP was to define a simple (not simplistic) standard and introduce it at speed. The route through this was to choose a fit for purpose approach, put it into action, and then improve it over time, versus investing time in overly sophisticated approaches that become inaccessible. We resisted the pull to get it right the first time and opted for an approach that modelled learning and improvement through practice and feedback.

» Work in the real work and build capability in the process—avoid “sheep dip” training at all costs: ADP develops capability by working in the real work and by teaching and coaching intact teams with their leaders. As ADP is about creating a new habit for work, the team unit provides the best chance of self sustainability and reinforcement. We are repeatedly asked to provide open enrolment training for individuals or groups of specialists; in the small number of instances where we have tried this, the return on investment has been marginal at best.

» Take metrics as seriously as the business does: the ADP team exists to improve the performance of GSK and deliver the capability to sustain ongoing improvement over time. The key to performance management is good metrics and the key to good metrics is to know if you are winning or losing. This philosophy is equally

Prologue: Lessons we have learned as OD Practitioners

Our journey has served to deepen our learning as OD practitioners—these are the key insights that we seek to embed in all future work.

Work in service of clients to enable them to solve their own problems, not to fix problems for them. One of the key differentiators in the work of ADP is to move away from being expert internal consultants called on to fix problems for our business teams and move towards a team who teaches our business teams how they can fix their own problems. In so doing we reduce their reliance on ADP staff for future challenges. However this simple principle is not always easy to implement, especially when teams want a quick fix, do not have the time to get involved themselves and want consultants to do the heavy lifting.

Practice what you preach. It will give you credibility with your business customers and demonstrates that change starts with self. Throughout its journey, the ADP team has never introduced a practice that it has not tested on itself. This makes the team better and more credible teachers when they take a practice to the wider organization.

Looking through three lenses on change and improvement provides a richer picture and delivers a bigger impact. The fusion of OD with PM and Lean Sigma has been singularly the most critical component in the ADP journey. Each discipline has great depth and wisdom and we have discovered the three are highly complementary—when you fuse and combine them something magical occurs. The multi faceted approach to dealing with the hard edge of business problems, intervening at the level of self, team and organization with the disciplined backbone of Lean sigma philosophy and practice is key.

Action-Coaching to develop role model leaders has had a major impact. The ADP style of coaching is to observe, provide feedback and suggest improvements as they occur. By being present and intervening in the moment, leaders and teams receive immediate performance feedback on which they can act and improve. We teach teams to develop this capability to sustain their performance improvement over time.
applied within the ADP team where our work is driven by a set of clearly defined lead (activity measures) and lag (outcome measures) indicators.

References


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Introduction

After 16 years as an OD consultant in the US, I immigrated to the UK in January 1987. On the one hand, I was well prepared occupationally for the cross-cultural experience. Formed initially through training based on approaches developed by the NTL Institute, I then studied for a doctorate. That program also had been heavily influenced by the founding traditions of NTL.

On the other hand, it proved necessary to modify my ways of working in order to be effective within the UK. Adjustments emerged during uncomfortable interactions with clients and colleagues, and resulted when making sense of successes and difficulties in particular cases or projects. Subsequently, my US-learned competencies were refined by a UK-oriented OD through training based on approaches developed by The Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (TIHR). Reflecting during consultancy and action research practice helped me to integrate my US and UK experiences.

In this paper, I illustrate how immigration continued a developmental process that required me to adjust professionally to my new country. I start with a short comparison of the NTL Institute (US) and The Tavistock Institute (UK). I then describe my journey from NTL-influenced training and development to arriving at The Tavistock Institute in London. Using four selected critical incidents, I reflect personally on what I have learned about being an OD consultant in the four countries that constitute the UK.

A Snapshot Comparison of Two Founding Traditions: NTL and TIHR

There may have been a time when the intellectual practice of OD mapped onto nations. Certainly in the 1940s–1960s, OD in the US was fuelled by the NTL Institute (known first as the National Training Laboratories). Meanwhile, The Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (TIHR) fuelled the OD equivalent in the UK. Both nonprofit organizations regularly and on purpose disseminated their ideas around the world. For a while, it was possible to trace movement of ideas from country to country. But maps stopped suggesting the territory a long time ago.

The NTL Institute (US) and The Tavistock Institute (UK) share some early history: both are credited with founding similar, yet different practices of group and organization development. As early leaders in applied behavioral and social science, both institutes became exemplars for approaches to understanding and intervening in social issues for individuals, groups, organizations, communities, and society overall. For this paper, I have revived my 1994 attempt to compare their early history and subsequent developments in the 1960s–1980s.

Both NTL and TIHR, incorporated around 1947, have roots in social systems change that started before, emerged strongly during, and following on from WWII. For a while, social scientists from both sides of the Atlantic Ocean were actively figuring out how to apply various blends of social psychology. Insights from
work with individuals were being incorporated into thinking about changing families, work groups, institutions, and making social change. In a mimeographed 1974 history of NTL’s early years, Bradford says that contributions flew back and forth.

Kurt Lewin was pivotal in this group. Indeed, he initially brought the Research Center for Group Dynamics together with The Tavistock Institute to co-sponsor TIHR’s journal, *Human Relations*. Within a couple of years of Lewin’s death in 1947, several US researchers decided to focus on larger scale studies using survey methodology. NTL became the home of experiential study of group processes. TIHR was busy using action research to help with therapeutic recovery and corporate reconstruction within the UK after the war.

Over subsequent decades, the two institutes were deeply productive and innovative. Both engaged in practical scholarship in the field (i.e., in workplaces, communities, and wider societal institutions) and in the laboratory (i.e., in experiential workshops where scientific principles were used to improve knowledge). Differences in emphasis and orientation based on the opportunities that came with funding, the role of the scholars and practitioners and—no doubt—aspects of national character influenced trajectories of development.

I have selected a few differences and similarities between NTL and TIHR to illustrate in Table 1. For example, NTL emphasizes immediate, overt dynamics

### Table 1: Snapshot Comparison of Two Founding Traditions: NTL & TIHR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The NTL Institute of Applied Behavioral Science (NTL)</th>
<th>Organizational Names</th>
<th>The Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (TIHR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1947: Bethel &amp; Washington, D.C. (US); Nonprofit; Membership Organization for Training, Development, and Research</td>
<td>Founding Date &amp; Location</td>
<td>1947: London (UK); Registered Charity; Employing Research and Development Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut State Inter-Racial Commission; National Education Association; Office of Naval Research</td>
<td>Significant Sponsor(s) &amp; Initial Funder</td>
<td>Tavistock Clinic; Rockefeller Foundation; Tavistock Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Effectiveness; Facilitation of Pragmatic, Behavioral Change; Democratic Leadership</td>
<td>Publicized Aims</td>
<td>Individual, Group, Organizational and Societal Well-Being and Effectiveness; Application of Social Science to Complex Problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social psychology, clinical psychology, community psychology, adult education, engineering</td>
<td>Disciplines of Founders and Early Developers</td>
<td>Psychiatry, psychoanalysis, social anthropology, mathematics, sociology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewin, Bradford, Rogers, Argyris, Beckhard, Benne, Chin, Bennis, Gibb</td>
<td>Selected Central Theorists</td>
<td>M. Klein, Bion, Rice, Trist, Miller, Emery, Jessop, Jacques, Menzies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal competence; shared leadership; group process and development; experiential laboratory; training groups; self as instrument; organizational process and development</td>
<td>Selected Major Constructs</td>
<td>Group and authority relations; basic assumptions; transference and resistance; social defenses; primary task; socio-technical systems theory; organizational environment; inter-organizational domain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual development; interpersonal and group relationships; organizational and community issues that block conscious, collaborative development and change; design of developmental processes</td>
<td>Common Diagnostic and Analytic Categories</td>
<td>Environmental demands and primary task requirements; role and authority issues; group and inter-group behaviour; social defenses; work organization design; design of working through processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate, overt dynamics; open communications; collaborative authority; managing differences; infrastructures for learning, development and change; self as instrument of change</td>
<td>Characteristic Consultancy Orientation</td>
<td>Covert, unrecognized dynamics; symbolic and political enactment of organization-wide issues; work organization design; insight for enhancing role-related authority to act; reflexivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T-group; laboratory approach; team building; Managerial Grid; organization development; consulting skills; third party consultation; community change; multi-cultural OD</td>
<td>Sample of Methodologies Emerging During Early Decades</td>
<td>Small study group; inter-group and large group meeting designs; socio-technical systems (STS) analysis – stepwise and non-linear; action research; participative evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association for Creative Change; Certified Consultants International; OD Network; Indian Society of Applied Behavioral Science</td>
<td>Selected Related Associations</td>
<td>A.K. Rice Institute; Scottish Institute of Human Relations and similar others (e.g., Scandinavia, Australia, Israel, Germany, Spain); Work Research Institute</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
that can be addressed in order for people to work together collaboratively and make progress. Whereas, TIHR tends to expect covert, unrecognized, or unacknowledged politics and unconscious defenses against addressing challenging issues, thus presuming that regression is always near at hand. Both institutes use participation and experiential learning as ways to explore motivations.

Neither institute can be said to be exclusively about OD. In my view, NTL Institute maintains a primary concern for individual and interpersonal effectiveness; this underpins team and coaching interventions as well as being enhanced by competence with social differences. While TIHR engages in lots of different activities, it seems to me that staff work substantially with participative evaluations of social policy, inter-organizational and work design interventions, and innovative applications of group and authority relations methodology.

Cross-fertilization continues between those involved with NTL in the US and those associated with TIHR in the UK. For example, researchers and practitioners attend each others’ conferences and read each other’s journals. Some people have been trained explicitly in selected aspects of both traditions. Many more, however, may not be aware of the integration of NTL and TIHR their trainers and professors pass on to them. The founding traditions have gone around the world and come back mixed with many other ideas and applications. Thus, the idea of a uniquely US OD or a uniquely UK OD no longer makes sense.

**Moving into Position to Integrate NTL with TIHR**

I first encountered OD in 1973 when an NTL-trained consultant came to my workplace to facilitate a team building session. Smitten immediately with the work, I was offered a bursary for my first residential laboratory at a spin-off training institute specializing in nonprofit systems. Three laboratories later, I was accepted into a two year program in applied behavioral science to study group process, educational design, personal growth, and organization development. During that certificate, I experienced a weekend Tavistock group relations workshop (which was so different from NTL that I found it confusing). Eventually as a practicing external consultant with a part-time internal change agent job, I was able to go to the NTL Institute’s 1981 summer season in Bethel. There I relished its Program for Specialists in Organisational Development (PSOD).

The following year, I entered US doctoral studies in a course that had originally been designed to offer NTL trainers an academic home. Established for many years, pressure was building on faculty and students to be less scholarly practitioner and more social scientist. Fortunately for me, the small group training at the university—a blend of NTL interpersonal effectiveness mixed with TIHR’s group-as-a-whole understanding - was the best I had experienced. Through my doctorate supervisor, I learned more about TIHR. Specifically, my participative decision-making speciality was much enhanced by studying action research and work organization design from TIHR publications. At an international conference held at my university, I met and corresponded with an elder at TIHR.

Being the grand-daughter of German and Scottish immigrants fed identifications with Europe. There was something in critical theory (e.g., the Frankfurt School) that spoke to my soul. To me, OD was at its best and most powerful when sociology, psychology, and politics came together. I had imagined Paris or Berlin. When the invitation arrived to apply for a job at TIHR in London, I jumped at it. As I only spoke American English, immigrating to the England made sense. To say that I was somehow steeped in the work of The Tavistock Institute is wrong; I was attracted to the spirit of TIHR—something about critical theory that at the time I barely understood. To me, I was moving to a workplace with the best of OD values.

Upon arrival, however, I discovered that my colleagues were very much steeped in the extraordinary and much revered work of TIHR. My sheer presence stirred Eventually, my empathy was aroused. While the tremendously productive and innovative TIHR work from 1940s–1970s was alive and kicking still, its vitality was not always in the form preferred by those outside of the Institute. What I mean is that in 1947 TIHR was the only kid on the UK block. In the subsequent six decades, the fields of OD, applied social science, and management consulting had mushroomed in the UK; thousands of competing universities, consulting firms, and potential collaborators now populate four small countries.
collaborators now populate four small countries. People, who learned a particular TIHR perspective through one of the many disseminated networks around the world, typically hope to find that perspective in London as they learned it. Sometimes they expect the modern day TIHR to be a sort of museum to the founding decades. This can be hard on current employees, and those associated friends of TIHR, who keep the Institute up-to-date and contemporary.

Scholarly Practice of OD in the UK

What I did not appreciate fully in 1987 was that working at TIHR and working within England, Wales, Northern Ireland, and Scotland was more than just an exciting opportunity. I had moved myself into a position that would require an integration of NTL and TIHR approaches to OD. Furthermore, such integration would prove necessary in order for me to be competent as an OD practitioner working in the UK.

For the purpose of this special issue, I select four critical incidents that provoked me to learn how to undertake OD in the UK. These have been encapsulated into vignettes below, followed by my reflections on three questions:

» What did this incident teach me about the UK context?

» How did contributions and innovations from The Tavistock Institute help me to adapt?

» What gives me confidence that integrating NTL and TIHR orientations enhances core values and principles for OD in the UK?

Vignette #1: Being Too Narrowly Focused

A few months after moving to London, I took advantage of an expectation that I would participate in TIHR’s well established, experiential program on issues of authority and leadership in organizations. This residential workshop includes 50-70 participants in two weeks of study in different configurations: small group, inter-group event, large group, institutional event, and application group. My critical incident took place at the beginning of the second week, during the institutional event.

We participants had formed ourselves into groups, using a process only slightly different from our recent inter-group event. My group had selected a particularly comfortable room with a nice view; awaiting the unfolding of something we did not understand, called an institutional event. We were well into several sessions of working together, studying what was happening and the related dynamics. I felt pretty good about how we were applying our learning from small groups and the inter-group event, as well as grappling with what was meant by the phrase, the institution.

Eventually, I understood that doing OD in UK meant noticing micro and macro simultaneously. British people often articulate how enabled or constrained they feel by larger systems in their lives. This awareness influences their attitude towards OD outcomes that amount to “fiddling while Rome burns,” to use a popular saying.

We had not felt the need for a consultant provided by the workshop management, but one offered himself to us and we accepted. He simply asked us if we knew that other groups were meeting with management to propose changes to the institution. I was floored! While we were being cozy and happy within our small group process, something important was happening elsewhere. I had been pleased with my and our learning process. How could this other, more political thing be underway without us being aware? As a specialist in participative decision-making, I felt mortified.

On reflection, I realized that I had acted out an either micro organizational behaviour (OB) or macro OB debate from my NTL-oriented studies. This debate states that OD practitioners either specialize in micro interventions (e.g., coaching or small groups) or macro interventions (e.g., work organization design or strategic planning). My workshop behaviour demonstrated that such a stark separation can result in missing something important.

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Lesson learned: effective OD interventions in the UK require multiple levels of analysis.

Vignette #2: Confusing Neutrality with Complicity

During my second year in England, the UK site of a US manufacturing firm contacted TIHR requesting socio-technical systems work design (STS). They hoped to implement semi-autonomous, working teams in a second plant built on a pre-existing site. Initial caution at having an American lead the TIHR team led gradually to management and trade union collaboration on 5 years of carefully planned and regularly reviewed OD.

Much was achieved. Performance of the new plant compared well with the 20-year old one. Action research roughly began with forming a management team to lead comprehensive changes, moved to STS design in the new plant, set up a payment re-design process across the whole
site, and started STS design in the older plant. The critical incident happened in the midst of this later stage.

Newer workers wanted the redesigned payment system to be implemented for them before the older plant was ready. Already, management had given equal pay, but held firm that the entire site would move forward together. One February, I arrived to find the site in turmoil. Gossip spread that the senior managers had agreed backstage to give new workers a raise immediately. Urgent consultations with individual stakeholders indicated no plans to address brewing conflict or debunk gossip. The Managing Director (MD) accepted my offer to chair an emergency meeting. Management listened somberly, while workers argued in front of them. Eventually, the MD re-confirmed that everyone would move forward together and ended the meeting.

In my US experience, union-management bargaining had been separated from participative OD meetings. In this UK case, union leadership had lost containment of competition between workers at the two plants; the Management Team under-estimated competition between the two Plant Supervisors. Existing agreements between the MD and the regional union representative reflected a one site stance. Being geographically distant from US HQ or UK trade union HQ both helped and hindered less formal interactions.

Between 1960s–1980s, TIHR’s work design approach had contributed substantially to an international macro OD movement (commonly known as the Quality of Working Life). Upon arriving in London, I had interviewed both union and employer organizations to give me some idea of the UK scene. Thus, I felt prepared professionally to assess the unfolding turmoil. Further, my experience with TIHR’s intense experiential workshops gave me courage to chair an unplanned and barely designed organizational process meeting.

Clearly, my political behaviour that day was on the edge of OD ethics. Confident that using OD to create better workplaces was core to both US and UK practice, it felt unprofessional to stand by while mishandled conflict wreaked a delicate point in the change effort, possibly beyond repair. I learned that doing OD in the UK meant that I needed a variety of ways (in addition to third party consultation and inter-group meetings) to work through politics fairly and openly. Lesson learned: staying neutral while political dynamics interweave and complicate OD interventions may make a consultant complicit within the UK.

Vignette #3: Getting Stuck at the Top

Around the time I took up dual citizenship, a paper manufacturer invited TIHR to submit a proposal for developing a people strategy to match their business strategy. This approach (commonly used by large UK enterprises) allowed OD ideas from competing firms to be compared. By telephone, I explained to the CEO that the Institute did not normally engage in such “beauty parades” (UK term), preferring instead to customize interventions based on diagnosis and in collaboration with clients. Reluctantly, I agreed to come for one conversation to explore the situation, to be followed by a letter summarizing my thoughts.

Thus began a series of (paid) meetings over six months with the executives. Basically we used a group-based diagnosis to conceptualize an intervention strategy for their task: going from a family owned business to an employee owned one. Apart from two complaints (that I didn’t sell myself or TIHR enough) we made progress, albeit with some difficulty. A critical incident happened at the third meeting.

We had sketched an approach that would sequence OD across two divisions with five sites. At each site, there were three layers of managers, elected trade union representatives, and a committee structure legally related to employee ownership. All of a sudden, an executive expressed frustration, “Just tell us what to do!” Another said, “You act as if we already understand this stuff, but we don’t.” I thought that I was using good educational design throughout. From the next meeting, I slowed down, pausing frequently for here-and-now reflection. They began working through differences of opinion between themselves about both the content and process for OD. Subsequently, we made a contract and a way forward.

When this incident happened New Labour and Tiananmen Square were on TV. The CEO delivered his idea (to avoid corporate takeover by restructuring for employee ownership) as if it were socialism. Executives had had negative experiences with consultancy firms; they wanted managers to control the change effort. Clearly, these executives wanted something different; but, I had not yet put together these UK trends for their total situation.

Once I sought case supervision at the Institute, I began to make sense of my experience. The challenging pace, without a definite contract, co-existed with mixed messages. Creative solutions were required in a rigid atmosphere. Finally, I spoke separately with three TIHR colleagues. One helped me understand family businesses at governance level; another explained employee ownership as protection from globalization; and, another hypothesized issues of different backgrounds and career aspirations. The total situation clarified.

This project stretched my capability to enact the OD value of self-as-instrument as I struggled to remain authentic and professional. The executives tried to get me to convince them by being more sales oriented or to bond with the CEO so they could disagree with him through me. By working with transference and counter-transference (as coached by my TIHR colleagues), it was possible to interpret what was going on and alter my work approach accordingly. But the breakthrough came when I could feel compassion for the executives’ total situation. Lesson learned: discerning the total situation within a specific UK context helps unblock OD and change difficulties.

Vignette #4: Missing an Opportunity by Being off Task

Three years ago, I joined forces with university colleagues in order to use OD with an Alliance of providers of health and social care for aging adults. They had received a regional grant for innovation in line with governmental changes. A stated priority was to ensure that small providers...
This project enacted British social policies on integrating national health services with government funded social services for aging adults. Regional government and geographical boundaries closely related to mechanisms for delivery, funding, and inspection. Location of nursing homes, health care, government offices, and transport systems between them shape people’s work, including influencing OD possibilities.

Because of this project, I read TIHR theory on inter-organizational domains, which alerted me to the idea of interfaces.

What is Different about OD in the UK?

Just because my adjustments when confronted by these critical incidents were informed by TIHR work, does that mean that all OD work in the UK is informed by TIHR? The answer to that question must be ambiguous. What if I asked: is all OD in the US informed by NTL Institute? In my opinion, probably most OD in both UK and US has been informed by both NTL and TIHR; but, the developments over the past 60 years can obscure the connections.

Just because I learned these four lessons while undertaking OD in the UK, does that mean that my learning characterizes all OD in the UK? Surely not! Throughout the UK, many uses are being made for terms like organization development, organizational change, change management, change leadership, and OD consulting. What is and is not pure OD or really OD must be understood as contested.

When someone in the UK refers to OD, they refer to their meaning of OD and how it is used in their situation. They may be able to compare what OD means to them with what it means based on what family, friends, and colleagues have experienced. In the UK, OD is not defined as one, reified approach.

I would be remiss if I neglected to mention an important point of contextual learning related to using the labels of UK or United Kingdom. It has been my experience that people in the UK expect me as an OD consultant to use the name of the particular nation in which they work, live or come from: England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. Indeed, this sensitivity can refer to regional differences as well (e.g., Northern England, Midlands, Southern Counties, etc.). People in the UK want me (perhaps as an American living and working in London) to acknowledge the many ways in which they say, “We are different.”

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To my surprise, socio-technical systems (STS) research on non-linear work design was relevant also. Three representatives (from different, yet involved organizations) coming together to resolve a mutual problem exactly illustrates the STS notion of deliberations at an interface. This insight pointed to potentially useful OD interventions.

Caring about social differences (e.g., disabilities, aging, and other vulnerabilities) was central to this OD. Service users, carers, and employees of service providers tend to be disenfranchised from opportunities for training and development, involvement, and consultation. Persisting in OD wider than the Alliance Board was motivated by core values around diversity and participation, but also the notion of keeping the whole system in mind. Lesson learned: interfaces provide promising points for intervention during OD in the UK.

The OD plan started with data feedback and planning, comprised of the Alliance Board (stakeholder representatives within the providers network) and a Consulting Team (academics who researched and taught health and social care for the elderly). Four streams of project work were identified, one of which aimed to convene group discussions with small providers to explore their reactions to government-managed innovations. However, the Alliance Board postponed the small provider work, focusing instead on building their organization and asking the Consulting Team to report on the other three streams.

We consultants encouraged the Alliance’s new executive director in finding money to hold small provider events near seacoasts and country sides where such “mom and pop” providers cluster. An incident took place near the end of this second funding. The owner-manager of such a nursing home told a detailed story of a complaint from a client resulting in her rating being reduced. She successfully challenged the decision, resolving the issue to the advantage of both her and the client. This upsetting situation had brought together (in different sessions) representatives from three organizations: service providers, service funders, and service inspectors. It became apparent that these discussions at the interface between the three resulted in innovations well within the government’s mandate.
Concluding Thoughts

I think it is fair to say that OD in the UK rarely takes place except as a part of some other changes. Those changes, and their accumulated methodologies and approaches, tend to be linked to particular managerial functions or particular occupational disciplines. These days, an integrated approach may come with an OD brand name. I have to stay open.

To me, doing OD in the UK requires that I keep multiple levels of analysis in mind at all times, allowing connections to emerge across those levels in service of the OD. I must accept that politics interweave and complicate the best designed OD interventions, insisting on being addressed and worked through without any innocent notions that good work is non-political. Only by working with transference and counter-transference can I stay effective when the realities of the total situation are flooding the client’s attempt to make progress.

Working beyond the top slice, as I call it, searching for points of interface for promising interventions, is a new OD in the UK insight for me. Sympathetic with my longstanding participatory change bias, I am still learning how to avoid the tendency to get stuck at the top during these economic down times. My current preocupation with the actual OD practice of internal change agents comes from UK and other European experience. I am confident that these integrations of NTL and TIHR approach have relevance for my OD work in the USA, as well.

References


Note: The Trist anthology of TIHR papers can be accessed electronically at www.moderntimesworkplace.com.

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“It is often the slow-to-emerge figures, which highlight the dilemmas that the client will really need to resolve if the consulting assignment is to make a sustainable change to their world. A fully developed, tightly co-ordinated action plan is unlikely to be consistent with a Gestalt approach to OD issues.”

A Gestalt Approach to Strategic Team Change

By Bridget Farrands

Introduction and Purpose

The purpose of this article is to describe and illustrate the practice and application of some core Gestalt principles in working with a strategic team, and the OD implications of such work. Gestalt approaches in working with organizations, teams, and individuals have much to bring to the practices of OD; but the field is a relatively new one and the ideas and practices are still being developed. As an OD practitioner of some 20 years, the use of Gestalt in my own consulting has been shaped by training and OD assignments in both the US and Europe which are expanded below as a frame to the case study which follows.

American and European Influences on My Practice

Gestalt philosophy was born in Germany in the late 19th century. It was an attempt to account for how human beings perceived the world. Its most significant contribution was to demonstrate the contextual nature of perception by showing that something only became figural in relation to something else which became background. The insight helped undermine the prevailing ideas about how perception occurred and eventually about the role of the brain in perception.

These ideas were translated into practice in the US through the therapy practised by Fritz Perls. His focus was individual, present focussed, experimental, often dramatic, and transformative for many people. Key to Perls’ focus was a perceptual ideal of a strong vibrant figure which symbolized confident self presence and individual peak experience. Developments in Europe were influenced by what was happening in the USA, but also by a lingering attachment to the work of the original pre-war Gestalt psychologists such as Wolfgang Kohler and Kurt Koffka (Ash, 1998).

The concept of figure and ground is a foundational one to Gestaltists. It provides a central creative tension to my own organizational work, arising from the ways my practice has been shaped by influences in both the US and Europe. Two important teachers of mine in the US have been Edwin and Sonia Nevis, themselves both pupils of Fritz Perls and his wife Laura. Through their teaching I experienced firsthand the empowerment and potential liberation of privileging self realization (the figure), over the hold of the historical and cultural context (ground) from which it arose. The optimism and sense of personal freedom that this orientation can create has been a powerful influence in my own practice—and especially important for me, working as a woman with often highly assertive male leaders. It is a compelling legacy of the dynamism and social upheavals of the 1960s and 70s—also personally formative years for me as a manager in the manufacturing industry. But my own roots as an English woman—now European!—grow out of a different historical ground which has also significantly shaped my practice.

My experience of the development of figure and ground in Europe is different
Leadership was expected to move from a uniquely singular practice to one that was collective, distributed, and shared, in support of the strategic business goals. In the highly competitive retail sector, and with uncompromising internal financial goals, the pressure on the team was acute (and visible to thousands) to learn fast, change their ways of working, and begin to lead differently.

Applying a Gestalt-based Approach to a Strategic Team: The Client and the Consulting Needs

How does a leadership team, responsible for 60,000 people in a national retail chain, change its way of working and leading so that those directly and indirectly affected by the team’s leadership would also be enabled to change the ways they then work?

This is the question that was posed 18 months ago by the National Stores Director (NSD). His question was prompted by a need for him to personally change how he led his team, mainly so that he could free up time to step into a COO role. The NSD had built a very loyal, dedicated, and stores-centred team—one that often felt closed and fortress-like to those outside it. This had an impact on their interactions with marketing, product development, and logistics, especially in how these teams collaborated with such a crucial group.

The whole question of team leadership was itself positioned in a wider context of the organization’s desire to develop a culture that demanded greater customer-centricity, innovation, and accountability from all its people. To lead such a change, senior leaders were being asked to balance their operational focus with increased time on coaching and developing their people. Leadership was expected to move from a uniquely singular practice to one that was collective, distributed, and shared, in support of the strategic business goals. In the highly competitive retail sector, and with uncompromising internal financial goals, the pressure on the team was acute (and visible to thousands) to learn fast, change their ways of working, and begin to lead differently.

Over a period of 14 months I joined the Stores leadership team for 6 intensive meetings of an evening and the following day. Each of these meetings centered on the current business agenda of the team. My role was to support their learning, as they did their work, a process we came to call “learn-as-you-work-as-you-learn,” which described the cyclical nature of doing something, stepping back to see what happened, and then deciding what...
and how to change for the next round of work in the meeting. In many respects this was an on-going cycle of figure/ground formation. The face-to-face work with the team was accompanied by a background of personal connections as I met members on other assignments, including one to one coaching, agenda planning meetings, and follow up sense-making calls. I also sent short YouTube videos, a range of articles, and occasional book chapters to the team in between meetings that related to the most recent work we had done.

The team members prided themselves on being practical, get-things-done kind of people; each person brought deep retail experience and within the industry they were seen as a formidable group. However, implementation of some decisions was often frustratingly difficult or inadequately achieved; and there were concerns that they were being insufficiently strategic.

My challenge in working with the team was twofold:
1. To enable the team to do the demanding work of leading the national stores with less reliance on the NSD and increasing inter-dependence within the team. This would involve different forms of collaboration and creating together new models of peer leadership.
2. To broaden their conversational capability so that they might add more reflection, relational awareness and creativity to the time they spent together once a month.

The hope was that both of these would be more likely to enable the team to shift their existing reputation (see above), work at a more strategic level of issue, and improve the quality of their cross-business collaboration.

Getting Started

Gestalt puts emphasis on contact with people, context, history, and need. It accepts that how each person and each part of a system perceives its world will determine in large part how it takes action. What we are energized by and take action around (the figure) emerges from a complex context (the ground). Beginning with some appreciation of the world of this team—its ground—and the types of issues/problems—the figures—it created seemed a first step to really contacting the world of the team. I decided that this would provide a basis for working in the team itself, so I used my own process of figure/ground formation to inform my work with them.

I began my work with lengthy 1:1 discussions with each member of the team before meeting them as a group. This shaped my own views on where to begin. At that point we had no end point—only agreement that there was a journey to go on and (mostly) everyone was willing to get started.

Throughout the work with the team I used a mixture of framing, showing, and telling each of which is described below as a way of bringing to life the Gestalt orientation I use. As their world became more visible to them and their ground enlarged, what emerged were alternative practices, based on different and more negotiated assumptions, which had the power to re-shape some parts of their world, and so of their leadership.

Framing involved managing expectations and intentions largely through pre-meeting contact with different team members, supporting the agenda preparation, and labeling the kinds of conversation the agenda would ask for. Framing was a different way of describing the ground of team meetings; it helped to establish the topics (figures) team members could expect to cover. Part of framing meetings deliberately asked team members to come with curiosity: they were invited to suspend the personal value each placed on knowing the answer. The team—and the organization—were heading into a future they had never met before. For leaders, it asked for such meta-skills as fast cycle learning, adaptability, self observation, and reflection. Competence in the team was more frequently demonstrated around providing solutions to issues, where activity was tactical and, for such a senior group, often over-detailed. The ability to lead for an unknown future meant becoming more competent in knowing at what level an issue needed framing, listening to a wide range of experiences and views (multiple figures), inviting challenge and learning a new kind of questioning (moving from “what shall we do” to “what don’t we know” and “how can we find out”). It involved working with a less structured agenda and having more open time where what needed to emerge could emerge; asking questions that exploited the potential of the present (Why is nobody saying anything when I ask this question? How come we are trying to make this decision again?) and using continuous re-framing as the issue evolved. Fundamentally, it asked the team to be open to expanding their understanding of the ground of the team, well before jumping in to solution finding, the minute a new figure emerged.

Showing was a way of working that involved bringing to attention often elusive human processes, and working with them—not allowing them to pass by. I worked openly with “moments.” These refer to the micro, hardly seen but always felt, pauses in groups: silent but loaded glances between two people, no response after a heartfelt comment, moving from one topic to another with a gulf of unspoken commentary hanging in the air. We all know them when they happen: working in the now involves highlighting them and finding out more about their significance. Such moments are often fleeting and, if not named and lightly held, easily take flight and so are lost as a source of learning. Specifically, this meant

» Growing the awareness of how the team operates in the present as it does its work by using real work as a basis for observing and understanding how the team actually works. Awareness is one of the Gestalt concepts held within the larger container of the figure/ground form. It is the process of making figural what is already in the ground. Awareness can refer to feelings, ideas, behavior, and what is said; essentially what is already present in some way.

» Changing the basis of contact, conversation, and disclosure so that the climate of openness and trust in the team was enlarged. Gestalt places a high value on honest contact and awareness of other as a basis for relationship,
which itself builds new ground from which new relational figures can emerge. Honest refers to authenticity: an approach that is a way of avoiding the deflections and social injunctions (only say nice things to people...don’t upset people etc.) that can stultify relationships and make change difficult. 

**Showing** involved the design of experiments that allowed the team to try out new ways of being together with no obligation to make these permanent work structures. Gestalt is a present-centred approach that was graded and grounded within the client’s grasp, and to give some understanding of what this could be like. My training with Joseph Zinker (Zinker, 1977) taught me to design experiments which were graded and grounded within the client’s experience, typically by involving the client in their creation.

**Telling** involved the careful introduction of concepts and ideas to support the team’s conversations. Without referring directly to Gestalt (it is a hotly disputed question within the Gestalt OD field as to whether it is necessary to label what we do as Gestalt, or whether what is more important is to live and use the practices), ideas here were useful if offered visually as models or frameworks. An example of such a concept was that of multiple realities. The team carried an implicit assumption—at least they acted as though they did—that everyone saw the world in a similar way. Because they worked at such pace on a complex agenda, they believed they could not spare the time to understand the variety of views (both figures and ground) in a discussion. But because every person’s personal ground is different and influenced by the wider context they share, taking the time to appreciate such differences was central to how decisions could be sustainable over time.

Over the months, the team came to see how its working pattern was an inter-connected series of assumptions which made a kind of world. Each team meeting was like a visit to this world with some assumed inevitability about how each person would need to act once there. These assumptions were creating fixed forms (gestalts) and it is these that the team worked on to change.

**Examples of Specific Practices Based on Gestalt Principles**

**Explicit feeling responses:** In the beginning, I heightened my contact with some team members by describing how moved I felt as they spoke about experiences which were affecting their work: of parenting a very sick child, of moving to a new part of the country, and struggles with a partner. Whilst some team members had close relationships, the climate when they met as a whole was often loud, jokey, and fast paced. Enlarging the range of responses they had with each other by including such emotionally vulnerable disclosures, seemed to legitimize this kind of talking and slowed down exchanges between people. In the slower pace there was time for speaking and listening differently, and so a different experience of contact with each other.

**Listening for possibility:** I probed members’ experience with questions which took seriously the difficulties of leading and working together. I was interested in how they accounted for what went on, and especially in how they experienced themselves as they spoke with me and each other. This was often a strange and hard question to answer: what did this have to do with anything? But as the connection between talking about a topic and how it felt to be having that conversation became tightly linked, so too did a greater appreciation that listening in a particular way supported disclosure of different kinds of information, which itself led to different kinds of discussion. We became equally interested in what was troublesome or difficult as we did in what was going fine. We avoided the tyranny of the positive, preferring to simply recognise what was happening without needing to ascribe a positive or negative value to it.

**Opening to assumptions:** As part of the work on multiple realities, I asked pairs to enquire into each other’s assumptions about certain key issues in the team (why are we a hard team for others to join? Why do we go round in circles when we make decisions?), aiming to avoid interpretations or judgements but following their
curiosity and trusting that the resulting enquiry would be enlightening for both. In the process each discovered differences, similarities, and the values that drove their partner. The change that took place in working with the business agenda that followed, was to enable discussions to be grounded in both the personal and the commercial, and to heighten the way in which unspoken assumptions could be a basis for de-railing decisions.

When team members were listening for the plan or the action it was hard for them to slow down into the more reflective space within which conversations concerning relationship or strategic possibility might occur; and such conversations tended to require more sensitivity to taken-for-granted assumptions. Team members tended to speak into the way they were being listened to.

Creating peer leadership: the NSD wanted the team to develop greater interdependence so that he could take on wider responsibilities. But how to enable the team to operate effectively without him being present? In effect, how could someone be “in charge” of the team on a temporary basis without setting any single individual up as the deputy, but giving them the authority to finalize decisions and act as though they were the leader? Gestalt has an inherent dislike of hierarchy; its ideas of top dog/underdog chime directly with the legacy of Fritz Perls and his radical take on structures of power and culture that he believed constrained self realisation.

The answer we came up with was to invent a rotating role which we called “the person-in-charge”! Embedded in the person-in-charge role were many challenges for those individuals who took it on:

- How to exercise appropriate authority over their peers.
- How to do real work whilst simultaneously experimenting with their leadership in a very visible setting of a peer group.
- How to replicate the quality of decision making that the NSD was known for.

- How to do all this and keep focused on the topic in hand.

My role was to create enough support for the person-in-charge so that s/he could experiment and learn about him/herself through the experience of being the person-in-charge. This was one of the most sensitive areas for the team to change. It was hard for these managers, with many years of learning how to make a hierarchy work, to find that the established order was suddenly so mobile. Although they understood the rationale behind doing it, the practice of making the person-in-charge role work well was often uncomfortable and awkward.

Random feedback: in my pre-work it became clear that feedback was something we needed to make livelier, spontaneous, and a routine part of the team’s working. It had become ritualized and boring: people typically heard little of value so its power as a basis for learning and change was starved of energy and immediacy. We used a number of feedback mechanisms, typically where people were given very little time to prepare and encouraged to speak simply from their direct experience of the person in the last 10 minutes or last hour. The emphasis was on describing felt experience and making short, phenomenological observations, avoiding the lengthy sanitizing that went on in so much of their feedback.

Signs of Change

There have been several changes in the team. They describe:

- The climate and the breadth of conversations the team can have together have significantly increased. Outright disagreements are still rare, but there is a willingness to stick with a discussion until the issue has been resolved and no longer suggestions to “discuss this off line.”

- Members continue to invest in knowing each other better in and out of their roles. They aim to spend time with each other in different parts of the country so that they understand better how their colleague leads in his/her own region, and to build the personal relationship.

- They continue to have meetings dedicated to themselves as a team and how they work. Discussions about relationships in and out of the team are a legitimate part of the work they do.

- They have learnt how to work together without the NSD being present—as is often the case. The rotating person-in-charge role has become a consistent part of the way they operate, as has feedback on how an individual undertakes that role.

- They are active and willing partners in a number of cross-business forums/teams and have made deliberate efforts to build relationships and draw closer to them key individuals with whom historically there had been animosity.

Reflections on Practice

As I reflected on this work with the NSD’s team, I take from it the following issues which have more general application in OD work.

- Context, context, context: the ground shapes everything and it takes deep immersion over time to appreciate its shaping influence on a system. Taken-for-granted assumptions about how things are need challenging to find out if they are still relevant or whether they are part of the problem. The consultant’s role here is to help the client to disclose the ground, to question the figures that emerge, and enquire into their relevance, so that it becomes a resource for development. As new figures emerge, the ones that are significant for the system attract energy
and interest; so contact and action grow from within the team rather than being the responsibility of the consultant.

» Listen, listen, listen: listening comes before speaking. But it is hard to be listening-neutral because too often we like to have confirmed what we are listening for. It is a change in listening that is likely to bring forth new speaking, and so the likelihood of a new future. When team members were listening for the plan or the action it was hard for them to slow down to the more reflective space within which conversations concerning relationship or strategic possibility might occur; and such conversations tended to require more sensitivity to taken-for-granted assumptions. Team members tended to speak into the way they were being listened to. If OD work supports system change, then changes to how we listen may be more significant than changing how we speak and what we talk about.

» Which agenda when? Many organizations are built around planning and budgeting cycles that take for granted that the future will happen as planned. They know it is unlikely, but they proceed as though it is true anyway. Working in a way which favours the present over the past and the future may make long term detailed organization change plans harder to support. Many OD projects, by their nature, need such plans. A Gestalt orientation asks the consultant to be both responsive to what is happening in the moment, coupled with the ability to retain a perspective on the longer term. And to know that as the present changes, it changes the future. The principle of holism tells us that as one part changes so the whole changes, which, in turn, changes the parts. The difficulty for many leaders of large systems is that this asks for them to live within more disorder than most are comfortable with. And it asks the consultant to do so too.

» Go slower to go faster: most leaders and many leadership teams want change to happen fast. Action is usually preferred over reflection. Within a Gestalt frame of reference on OD, the idea that these are separate is challenged. Action takes a number of forms of which reflection is just one; others include experiments and new methods of contact. In the early meetings of the team this slowing down to make sense as a group was a struggle. The urge to move to something else, to come up with one quick answer involved patience and trust. What helped was a client who could be himself open to new practices, to learning about himself and who put his leadership behind the discovery of new approaches to the team’s working. As a result he modelled and valued appropriate slowing down as a way to move ahead with more pace.

In Conclusion

For OD practitioners, it is hard to draw a direct cause-effect line between ideas, actions, and outcomes. The results above came about because of many, many influences and supports on the team—including a powerful business imperative to change, which a group of intelligent people could clearly understand, and where the results of not doing so would be personally unthinkable. As the consultant, having a client dedicated to sustaining this work over an intensely busy time with an unmoving insistence that it was business critical, was rare and invaluable.

References

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Round Tables

Are We Really Making the Most of Our Large Groups?

By Julie Beedon

As OD practitioners we are often involved in facilitating large organizational conferences or meetings. Many OD practitioners on the NTL OD Certificate Course share with me their frustrations in wanting these sessions to be more dynamic and interactive. Over 20 years ago I chose to focus my practice on the field of Large Scale Interventions (LSIs). This article reflects on the changes I have seen in those 20 years, how the field has developed in the UK, and what we need to pay attention to as practitioners if we want to use the power and potential of large groups most effectively.

I explore the impact and potential of four stories from my own work in the UK that embody the underlying principles at the heart of LSIs. I also use the reflective metaphor of the “round table” that I have come to see as an icon of the degree of change which is really present.

When I discovered the field of Large Scale Interventions (LSIs), I was on a research trip in the US looking at “empowerment.” As an internal practitioner supporting the transformation of a 5,000-person organization around Quality, I and my colleagues noticed we had begun to stagnate and wanted something to energize the workforce. Our visit to Marriott Hotels showed us how they had been combining “whole hotel” interventions with quality tools and strategy. We then worked with Dannemiller Tyson over two years and, in particular, with Robert (Jake) Jacobs as he was writing *Real Time Strategic Change* (1993) to use large scale approach to enable and accelerate our change process. In a chapter for *Managing Change in the New Public Sector* we talked about this period of our transformation as Strategy, Breakthrough, and Alignment. The LSIs we held were critical to developing strategic alignment across the system and achieving breakthrough results. At the time I can recall that many in the quality community were very resistant to the ideas behind LSIs and thought they were more about hype than real work. The tension between having fun and doing real work continues to lay behind a lot of the resistance I encounter.

In the UK, much has been done to support people using LSIs since then. And I have been privileged to be involved and to meet with many of these people. Billie Alban and Barbara Bunker have played a significant part. One of the early works I read on the subject was their special issue of the Journal of Applied Behavioral Science on LSIs (1992) when they first observed the emergence of large group work in organizations. They came to the UK many times bringing their wonderful workshop on *Large Group Methods* that stimulated interest and energy. It was from them that I learned the value of seeing the principles underlying the methods which in their later book *Large Group Methods* they describe as inclusion of stakeholders, engagement of multiple perspectives through interactive activities, opportunity to influence, and search for the common ground. I first met Marvin Weisbord and Sandra Janoff in Oxford in 1995. This had been set up by the New Economics Foundation who has played an important part in the adoption of these approaches.
One National Event we were invited to had round tables and flipcharts, but most of the day was spent listening to presentations, and there were external consultants at each table briefed to facilitate in the interest of specific goals. The event looked participative, but there was limited sharing of the multiplicity of perspectives, and the presence of expert facilitators minimized self-management.

approach in the same year. The National Health Service in the form of the Modernization Agency and subsequently the NHS Institute (http://www.institute.nhs.uk) has been a huge advocate of LSIs and has supported many workshops and sharing of learning. Weisbord continues to contribute to our understanding as a Fellow at Ashridge (http://www.ashridge.org.uk). Ashridge has specialized in Appreciative Inquiry (AI) and has developed a team with strong large scale skills. Mee-Yan Cheung Judge includes the field of LSIs in her NTL (http://www.ashridge.org.uk) and has developed a team with strong large scale skills. Mee-Yan Cheung Judge includes the field of LSIs in her NTL OD Program, and knowledge, understanding, and adoption has grown steadily over the last 10 years.

The first of my case stories goes back to my time as an internal consultant. In the Employment Service the most significant of our breakthrough events was a large scale meeting of 600 staff in the Birmingham Area. This event lasted two days. The teams from every office in the region were allocated by a lottery system for each role so we had a completely representative mix of the system in the room. The process began with a period of connection around the things people were proud and frustrated about in their role. The Chief Executive spoke about the relationship between the Employment Service and the Government and shared his perspective on a future that required “more for less.” Participants diagnosed the system through exploring what they were “sad, mad, and glad” about in relation to a number of management processes, and a panel of customers gave honest insights into the challenges and opportunities they faced. Quality Task Force participants highlighted opportunities for change and the Leadership Team proposed a new Strategy. Everyone in the room gave real-time feedback on the strategy and overnight it was changed extensively to take account of their input. The rest of the event saw a range of creative work on how to enact the strategy across the organization and in local teams. Over the following weeks every office held their own mini-event designed by people who had been in the large meeting and within three months the region’s results had gone from being the worst in the country to the best. The real work we achieved in those two days seemed to cover something like 100 meetings and a year’s progress.

Having discovered the power of LSIs, combined with other tools, to facilitate transformational change, we were determined to learn more and spread the word. By the time we left the Employment Service, people from across the country had been part of this new style of meeting. Something we noticed then was that easy as it was to adopt the structure and some of the processes, some people missed the underlying principles that make them powerful. One National Event we were invited to had round tables and flipcharts, but most of the day was spent listening to presentations, and there were external consultants at each table briefed to facilitate in the interest of specific goals. The event looked participative, but there was limited sharing of the multiplicity of perspectives, and the presence of expert facilitators minimized self-management.

By 1999, interest in LSIs had spread across the English Civil Service, and the Chief Secretary in the Cabinet Office was keen to embark upon reform by engaging the whole service in a radically different way. He commissioned a series of regional events to bring together a cross section of grades from all departments in exploring new possibilities. The design team (a cross section of participants) named these events Make it Different and sought to embody new ways of working in real time. They mapped out current realities, shared images of the future (many of which are now realities, e.g., renewing car tax on line) and on many occasions shaped their own agendas in Open Space. The Cabinet Secretary, Sir Richard Wilson, has described the work by saying “when we started I was not sure these ideas about involving people would work. But they did. The whole thing was a huge success and I was proud of it.” He was not sure but he trusted in a set of principles that he might not have understood at the time but which made sense to him. They aligned with his own vision of a service which had stronger leadership at all levels, a clear sense of purpose, better planning and performance management, with dramatic improvements in diversity, and being more open to people and ideas. In a presentation to the Organization Design Forum in 2005 Sir Richard (by then Lord Wilson of Dinton) said that he believed the key task of leadership is to put staff in touch with their own vision and dissatisfaction. He described his personal aspiration for something different from the traditional glitzy event and passive engagement and his aim for something novel and risky that would challenge defensive routines. He noted his own nervousness in trusting a design team and remarked on four things about the resulting design as being of note – the round tables, the levelling of rank, the individual voice, and
the interactive assignments. He said it felt dangerous and exhilarating. These meetings worked because they not only adopted a new structure, but they were designed to follow a consistent dynamic, captured in the “meeting canoe” (2004) (Figure 1).

Another story from a retail bank echoes Richard’s insights into the transformational power of the overall social architecture of change provided by large scale engagement. This started with a desire to change the way the regular Management Conference of 250 managers was planned and organized and resulted in a large scale process engaging 40,000 employees. It included most of the members of the management committee attending a 4-day workshop on engaging and convening skills. The Management Conference planning team was highly creative in developing a conference the team was excited about for the first time in years. After one conference many of the managers were committed to taking the experience further into the organization. They were in the middle of creating a new strategy and decided to invite hundreds of people from across the organization to help them shape it. This input was so relevant and valuable they decided to plan even wider engagement based on “workmats” which every office could work through and provide feedback on. The processes captured in the mats were another form of the same large scale principles of social architecture and active participation by all, and were hugely successful in shaping a new branch culture of service. The ManCo team said “we have spotted and taken the opportunity of utilizing the principles in so many ways since, whether it be the layout of a room, the engagement of interested parties at the outset rather than the output stage, understanding what the audience needs to receive rather than just what the presenter wants to deliver . . . “ And “we built a belief that makes us want to carry it through the whole management team and other parts of the organisation are starting to see that there might be different ways of working . . . “

I now appreciate the importance of trusting the process. There was a stage at which I did not believe we would get the ambitious goals we needed and then I winced in shock at how audacious they were. But they were the right goals to really make a difference and, with the high level of engagement that created them, were the foundation to move us from a 0 star Trust to a 3 star Trust.

Indeed when we first started working with Dannemiller Tyson in 1992 and held our first Interactive Strategic Planning event the layout of the room in round tables of 8 people was something of a shock to venue and participants alike. In those days wherever we did our large-scale work, people would crowd around the doorway watching in fascination as a large group of people worked together productively around round tables.

As I reflected on these stories and thought about how much has changed, I was struck by the round table as the icon of how much has changed and how much is still possible. When I began my OD career as an internal consultant in the late 1980s, large meetings and training events were laid out with rows of chairs or desks all facing the front. Indeed when we first started working with Dannemiller Tyson in 1992 and held our first Interactive Strategic Planning event the layout of the room in

My final story applies the principle to a merger of five Health organizations. When the CEO was appointed she had already worked with LSIs in her role as Health Action Zone Director (a shared post across Local Authority and Health). She decided to create the new organization using a radically different approach to the usual Board-led design. Over a period of three months several events were held: a trade fair allowing teams to showcase their services and share their aspirations for the future; a leadership alignment event for key decision-makers; and a whole system visioning event including a wide range of stakeholders in mapping the present and envisioning the future. A smaller workshop with a range of volunteers from across the system then drew on the outputs of all three events to pull together a core purpose, audacious goals, and values. These were then developed over a series of annual events, including an Open Space to plan action on the goals; a learning review revising and shaping the goals and values; and an Appreciative Inquiry into how to build on success. In a presentation to the Organization Design Forum, the CEO Sophia Christie said,
round tables of 8 people was something of a shock to venue and participants alike. In those days wherever we did our large scale work, people would crowd around the doorway watching in fascination as a large group of people worked together productively around round tables.

As late as 2001, I was speaking at a Linkage Conference in Brussels at which Peter Block was the keynote, and I can recall his ironic attack on the social architecture of the meeting. He was gently mocking the traditional room arrangements, which had us all looking at each other’s back and gave him a third of the usable space. The capacities he outlines for social architecture in The Answer to How is Yes (2002) are held in common by many of the leading thinkers in the field of large scale interventions. He describes the capacities for convening: getting the right people in the room; taking care of the physical space and airtime with high interaction activities; naming the question and initiating new conversations for learning; and sticking with strategies of engagement and consent and supporting local choice. All of this echoed for me my early learning from Billie and Barbara.

Yet many of the large meetings at round tables I see today do not embody these principles, and certainly not those of the Linkage type of learning conference which has now shifted to having the round tables but is still focused on expert speakers. It seems that the structure for LSIs has been adopted without the principles and processes that make them so transformational. I was talking recently to the Managing Director of an organization with a national role in innovation and change and I was shocked to hear him say, “These large meetings are OK if you have a message to get across but not so useful if you want to get real work done.”

I was talking recently to the Managing Director of an organization with a national role in innovation and change and I was shocked to hear him say, “These large meetings are OK if you have a message to get across but not so useful if you want to get real work done.”

I see the relationships and connections across the approaches.

As I reflect on my own case studies, several lessons spring out at me from the things my clients have said at the time and since:

» Start the co-creative process as early as possible in scoping and designing the change process with a diagonal slice of the organization

» Trust the process

» Design interventions so that the conversations build and flow using the meeting canoe framework.

» Consistently apply all 4 of the principles which underpin the LSI approach by 1) widening the circle to include all stakeholders; 2) engaging multiple perspectives to build a bigger understanding of the whole system; 3) allowing opportunities to influence through self management and democratic processes; and 4) searching for common ground that looks to the future and creates communities of action.

» There is no doubt that seating people in groups of the right size to facilitate participation around a table is a good foundation for realising these principles. However, large group meetings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alban and Bunker</th>
<th>Jacobs</th>
<th>Axelrod</th>
<th>Weisbord</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion of Stakeholders</td>
<td>Create Community</td>
<td>Widen the circle</td>
<td>Whole system in the room</td>
<td>Poetic—people co-author the story</td>
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<td>Engage multiple perspectives</td>
<td>Build Understanding</td>
<td>Connect people to each other</td>
<td>Explore the “whole elephant”</td>
<td>Constructionist—discovery</td>
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<td>Reality is a key driver</td>
<td>Positive—source of energy</td>
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<td>Opportunity to Influence</td>
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<td>Self manage and responsibility for action</td>
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<td>Search for Common Ground</td>
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<td>Future focus &amp; common ground</td>
<td>Anticipatory—collective imagination</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1

Particularly when people say, “Oh we have done Future Search... or Open Space etc...” and I find they did half a day using something I could barely recognise. What stood out for me early on, as a mathematician who likes to work from first principles, was that the principles mattered as much if not more than the processes and structures that surround the work. Each approach has its own set of principles which help us to understand the differences between the approaches and to make choices about their appropriateness. Table 1 shows how
are not large scale interventions. I am often asked what I mean when I draw a distinction between a meeting of a lot of people and a large scale intervention, and I use Table 2 to explain what I see as the marked differences.

I have enjoyed my 20 years in the field; it has been full of learning and seeing the transformational results in many organizations have been extremely rewarding. The general implementation of a new social architecture for meetings, including round tables where they are used for genuine dialogue and deliberation, is a heartening indication of a widespread interest in more dialogical processes in the workplace. However to realize the genuine potential of these interventions for getting real work done, quickly, in a transformational way, we must pay more attention to the critical design and delivery processes for the meeting; and these go some way beyond the shape of the table and layout of the room.

Table 2

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Large Scale Interventions</th>
<th>Large Group Working</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dynamic System</td>
<td>Internal System</td>
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<tr>
<td>Active Participation and Shaping</td>
<td>Discussion and Response to Input</td>
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<td>Action Learning</td>
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<td>Sense Making</td>
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<td>Whole Person</td>
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<tr>
<td>Distributed Leadership</td>
<td>Leadership Up Front</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wisdom from the Participants</td>
<td>Wisdom from Visiting Experts</td>
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References


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“Our experience prompts the question whether there is practical learning to be passed onto others wishing to adapt OD work to an environment that does not embrace programmatic OD interventions, and who might want to try a more flexible or organic approach.”

The Innovation Space
A Case Study in Adaptive OD

By David Roe

This case study shows how useful and pioneering work on developing organizations can be done in an environment such as a central government, where Organization Development has not yet been established or widely recognized as a field of practice. That was achieved by quietly and opportunistically adapting OD-inspired interventions to the needs of the organization, while holding fast to OD practice and its principles of openness, democracy, and learning.

The case study describes how The Innovation Space was established and the context in which this happened. It explains how a creative space and the relevant skills of a small team have supported change during a challenging time. It highlights the value of having an authentic “locus,” of working with the organization’s priorities and language, and of balancing distinctive ways of operating with being highly connected.

It has been prepared with the support of the Department for Business, Innovation, and Skills but does not necessarily represent the Department’s position—the analysis and conclusions are solely those of the author.

My Organizational Development Reference Point

OD is notoriously difficult to pin down. So I will begin by highlighting three things differentiating it from other approaches to change and innovation. These are the aspects I had in mind, in telling the story of our attempts to support organizational change by developing a physical space dedicated to innovation and learning.

The first is OD’s preoccupation with the complexity of human behavior and social systems. This includes the application of “behavioral-science knowledge” (Beckhard, 1969, p.9) to organizational change. It also implies tolerance of ambiguity and a willingness to invest time in reflection as well as action.

Second, the practice of OD is associated with certain humanistic values, including democracy and participation, openness to experimentation, belief in the worth of all individuals, and informed choice (Cheung-Judge & Holbeche, 2011, p.19).

Finally, OD is typically programmatic, “planned, organization-wide, and managed from the top” (Beckhard, 1969, p.9). Such a process is likely to be supported by engaging consultants with the appropriate skills and values.

The Environment for OD in Central Government

The conditions for systematically deploying OD to support behavior change in central government in the UK are not particularly favorable.

Since the middle of 2011, OD has begun to have a visible presence, with the creation of a shared service staffed by senior practitioners drawn from the small community of government OD. Previously, they were diffused around the system, loosely networked and concentrated within
a few of the largest departments and agencies. Some of their time is now made available to offer cross-departmental support for change.

However these are very recent developments. There is as yet no shared history of significant OD interventions within UK government departments and little evidence that its potential value is appreciated—a vicious circle, from which it is difficult to disentangle cause and effect.

Many definitions of OD highlight the connection between organizational change and learning: “change always involves organizational learning, and organizational learning is always change” (Myers, Hulks, & Wiggins, 2012, p.166). OD has been defined as “a complex educational strategy” (Bennis, 1969, p.2) and a way of teaching the organization (French, Bell, & Zawacki, 2000). If organization development is thus rooted in learning, for an organization to benefit from OD it needs to possess or be capable of adopting a learning culture. A possible paradox for those working on OD is that while “no organization needs to be capable of adopting a learning culture. A rooter in learning, for an organization to do OD in any stable and robust public bureaucracy might point to the absence of corporate mortality and, as a consequence, of the perceived need to change in order to survive. Finger and Burgin Brand reflect that “in the private sector, change is a given” but that “this is not as straightforward in the public sector, where better arguments why change is necessary still need to be developed” (1991, p.131). Chapman contends that in the UK the senior Civil Service is relatively closed to new ideas compared with a private sector where “most business managers are eager to discover techniques or approaches that might give them a commercial edge” (Chapman, 2002, p.69).

Whatever the underlying reasons, it seems fair to say that OD practitioners working with or in central government in the UK are operating largely in uncharted territory; and that, here at least, OD’s time has not yet come. My experience is that, although several years have passed since Harrison’s paper, it remains for now the case that it “is not so much that OD in [UK] government has failed, but rather that it seems never really to have been properly tried” (Harrison, 1985, p.27).

The Organization

The UK Department of Business, Innovation, and Skills (BIS) is a major Department of State, headed by elected members of the Government of the day and staffed mainly by permanent Civil Servants, whose role is to provide impartial advice and manage the implementation of government policy. It employs some 2,500 people, mainly in Central London and South Yorkshire.

In late 2010 BIS was reducing headcount by over 20% under the Government’s deficit reduction strategy. This program required similar reductions in resources across central government, to be effected very rapidly. BIS’s priority was urgent restructuring, to enable the organization to operate effectively at smaller scale. That meant reducing the number of business units and management layers. As well as cutting costs of employment, this was a way to enable more flexible and productive ways of working. The need to support organizational reengineering (the technical side of change) with attention to relationships and behavior (the human side) was recognized (Schein, 1992). The latter aspect became focused in due course on making the organization more open, more flexible and more innovative. It was not however regarded as such an immediate priority.

Identifying Existing Resources for Supporting Change

BIS in December 2010 had no designated capability in OD or internal change consultancy. It did however have an in-house innovation capability team, whose role was to promote ways of identifying, testing, implementing, and spreading ideas that added value to the delivery of public services. This team became the nucleus of a handful of employees with experience in relevant fields, including organizational design, innovation tools, and group facilitation, and the capability to apply (albeit with a light touch) some knowledge of the behavioral sciences. Moreover, BIS possessed a further developmental asset—a suite of creative workshop spaces. These rooms feel very different to the rest of the
by attending to group processes and patterns of participation (Cheung-Judge & Holbeche, 2011). It follows that any organization that cares about its effectiveness should pay attention to the quality of its meetings. Specifically, public sector organizations would do well to value time spent reflecting and sense making, as a source of innovation (National School of Government and DIUS, 2009).

Clients from every professional group and business unit can take advantage of the ambience of the Space for inclusive—and where appropriate reflective—dialogue. Groups spanning departmental or professional boundaries are given special encouragement to use the Space, since efforts at planning and sense-making are likely to benefit from being as system-wide as possible.

A guiding belief behind The Innovation Space was that many people feel inferior or unable to be heard in traditional meeting settings. The physicist David Bohm is quoted as saying that “hierarchy is antithetical to dialogue” (Senge, 2006, p.228). Everything from the construction of agendas to arrangement of the furniture in meeting rooms tends to reinforce divisions of seniority and status. Recent developments in neuroscience (Rock, 2009) support the intuition that the resultant social stress impairs analytical thinking, insight, and problem solving; and that people become more creative and open to ideas and their voices more likely to be listened to, in less threatening settings.

In the language of OD, the Space therefore offers those “opportunities to discuss trans-hierarchically and trans-sectorally” that are “a necessary condition for the learning organization” (Finger & Burgin Brand, 1999, p.145).

One senior client and champion of the Space captured in a blog on the BIS innovation website the essence of the “practice field” (Senge, 2006, p.240) to which we provided access:

“As soon as I step through the doors of The Innovation Space, I have a palpable sense of permission to challenge and to think about things differently. I have watched groups of people arrive there, set on a particular solution, and thanks to skillful facilitation and setting, they come away with exciting new ideas.”


A Learning Zone
The team decided to take literally the OD metaphor of “creating space for learning and inviting people in” (Senge, 2006, p.329). We invited people in to explore the physical reality of a “free space for learning” (Finger & Burgin Brand, 1999, p.148). We encouraged them to hold their team-building events in the Space, as a cheap alternative to “away days” (off-sites), which are now discouraged for reasons of cost. The team also developed a partnership with the Department’s learning and development professionals, as a result of which skills training and group activities focused on personal development also take place in the Space.

The team itself used the Space to train BIS colleagues in facilitation skills. The program covered “developmental” and “basic” facilitation (Schwarz, 2002, pp.50–51), reflecting the range of what happens in the Space. The business case for investing in this training emphasized the cost-effectiveness of having in-house facilitators to support workshops in the Space.

It was always hoped that giving people the opportunity to explore new ways of working within the Space would gradually influence the organization beyond it, through clients who enjoyed and benefited from their experiences and then started to change how meetings are run outside the Space. A second purpose of the facilitator training program reflected this aspiration. It was to develop a network of change agents with values and skills that they could use and teach to others beyond the Space, with the potential to grow communities for change and learning (Axelrod, 2010).

A Stage for Innovative Policy-Making
In addition to its directly developmental work, and probably more valued by the majority of its clients, the facility responds to the demand for creative policy-making.
within the Department’s core economic growth agenda. That is to say, as well as contributing to the internal development of the organization, it also supports its outward-facing role in helping UK businesses succeed and adapt to the changing economic and political environment (Schein, 1965).

The opportunity to be innovative about “real work” creates much higher levels of interest and utilization of the asset than would have been likely had it been reserved for overtly developmental work. Both aspects are however driven and connected by a belief in the power of open and collaborative conversations.

We wanted as many people as possible to experience the Space and interest was generated by its use as a showcase for open approaches to policy-making, for example in high-profile workshops on the future of UK High Streets, led by the fashion guru, Mary Portas. One influential participant described these as “a really good advert for how government can engage people and drive a policy process.”

The Space has also begun to attract international attention, with recent visitors from as far away as Taiwan, Singapore, Japan, and India.

The Name

The OD aspect of the relaunch in December 2010 was not explicit. The new name was chosen from suggestions submitted by employees. The choice of The Innovation Space honored a cherished value of the Department, and indeed its own name. In truth, this is more a reflection of the Department’s important role in promoting innovative technologies than of any preoccupation with the complexities of changing organizational behaviour. Our emphasis on innovation in presenting the purpose of the Space nevertheless seemed to be an authentic way of aligning our developmental objectives with the values and aims of the Department.

Subculture of the Team

The language of OD was used sparingly, to reflect existing realities. References to trans-hierarchical discussion or even to the learning organization were not likely to have meant much to prospective clients and supporters, and may have put them off.

However, the Space’s marketing literature referred explicitly to “an ethos of learning together and making connections” (www.bis.gov.uk/policies/public-sector-innovation/the-innovation-space). This was intended to reflect how we wanted things to be for both clients and those managing the Space. As well as embracing choice, equity, and openness in its services (the Space being expressly open to all), the team reflected broader OD values in its own processes.

The Space is part of the Department. Members of the team are mainly members of the permanent Civil Service, and are bound by its terms of employment, as well as by its norms and culture. Efforts were nevertheless made to create and sustain a distinctive subculture, as the team wanted to be a quiet exemplar of the ways of working we hoped clients of the Space would adopt—to “be the change we wanted to see” (Cheung-Judge & Holbeche, 2011, p.107). That included relative disregard for hierarchy within the team, continuous team learning and reflection and enthusiasm for collaboration across boundaries. These incidentally match the characteristics of a “more dynamically capable” Civil Service, recommended by a group of UK experts in 2007 (Barwise, MacLeod, Richards, Thomas, & Tranfield, 2007, p.33): “socially distributed leadership,” “a ‘learning to learn’ culture,” and “effective cross-department working.”

Evaluation

Levels of usage (quantitative data), information about the range of clients and their experiences and feedback (qualitative data) were carefully monitored from the outset. More than 700 clients booked the Space in its first full year of operation. Some 90% rate their experience good or excellent. Measures are now being put in place to assess the longer-term outcome of clients’ experience, for example in the form of better policy outcomes.

Feedback was also sought from members of the 50-strong facilitator network on the outcomes of their involvement. One reported that:

the experience of the pilot [training program] (and applying the skills since) has helped me to be more self aware. I think this makes me a better participant in conversations as I’m more able to make sense of how I feel, why I feel that way, the impact it might be having on the other person and the dynamic that arises... The person I coach seems to be getting lots from our sessions (and keeps coming back for more). (Private correspondence with the author)

Links with Formal Change Program

As already noted, BIS’s formal change program was initially focused on restructing. By mid-2011 the restructuring program had largely been completed, and its leaders were ready to prioritize issues of flexibility, openness, and innovation and to start tackling them systematically across the Department. By then, the use being made of the Space for developmental work made it an obvious place from which to do this. Ensuing stages of the program have made extensive use of its facilities, alumni and clients, and of the approach to innovation and change that it pioneered.

Conclusion

The story of The Innovation Space suggests how, in an organization with no history of “official” OD, OD-savvy change agents can...
make an impact on organizational effectiveness, if they have “support from above and a modicum of room to experiment” (Meyerson, 2001, p.94), and provided they are opportunistic. Whilst the impact may initially be modest, there is every prospect of giving effect to the principle that “small, well-focused actions can sometimes produce significant, enduring improvements, if they’re in the right place” (Senge, 2006, p.64). It also shows how these practitioners can enjoy some OD magic without needing to be at all noisy or upfront about it—perhaps a typically British adaptation of the field!

Our experience prompts the question whether there is practical learning to be passed onto others wishing to adapt OD work to an environment that does not embrace programmatic OD interventions, and who might want to try a more flexible or organic approach.

Unsurprisingly, the key tip would be to pay particular attention to gaining and maintaining legitimacy, or a “license to operate.”

I like to think of The Innovation Space in terms of creating a locus for our work: both in the literal sense of a place or locality connected with particular events, and also as the abbreviated form of *locus standi*, meaning “a right to be heard.” So look, first, for opportunities to establish a locus, whether in the form of a workshop space or some other valuable asset.

Second, make yourselves very useful, and do it on the organization’s terms. In our case we aimed to respond to permanent demands for innovation and effective public policy-making. This was reflected in our language. It meant saving OD discourse and OD advocacy for another day.

Third, pay attention both to standing for something distinctive and to being integrated into the organization. This is a similar balance to that achieved by the “tempered radicals” described by Debra Meyerson (Meyerson, 2001, p.93). The Innovation Space team has tried to create a subculture, reflecting values and skills espoused in OD circles, and to develop its own networks. It has however done so in a mainly low-key way, and at the same time worked hard to connect with the widest possible range of client groups.

Finally, be sure to engage top-level support, but be willing to do without a planned, system-wide OD program. That may mean working with existing change programs that are not highly OD-oriented. It also means trusting your instincts. This case study inevitably contains a significant amount of rationalization after the event. At heart, it is a story about spotting an opportunity to do something useful and grasping it—which may be as sound an approach in OD as in any other field.

References


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3 From legal Latin—definitions adapted from Webster’s 3rd New International Dictionary.
“We are scientists and analysis of data is important to us.” So stated the scientist head of the improvement team as one of his final reflections on the work described in this article. In OD on the other hand, quantitative measurement of improved performance—putting a figure on human activity—is a contentious issue that tends to get caught in debate, is underemployed, or neglected altogether.

This article, co-written by a PhD research scientist and an OD consultant, describes a case where data collection, analysis, and metrics were embedded as integral ingredients in a culture change program aiming to establish Project Management and High Performing Team practices in the project matrix environment of a multi-discipline, multi-site chemical development division. Data was collected, analysed, and distilled for the purposes of:

» The presentation of “soft” findings to a “hard” scientific audience;
» Involving all staff in identifying problem elements and solutions that lead to an overarching statement of aims and values;
» Making a convincing case for change to a divisional Executive Team with diverse starting positions;
» Planning a global-reach large group intervention;
» Ensuring good basic staff communication and continuity over a long time frame; and
» Reinforcing major points of training and of improvement activities by keeping key process issues up to date and providing materials for regular team meetings.

A key element in the work was identifying who was responsible for the process for distillation and dissemination of key messages, ensuring application of learning, and keeping up momentum of the performance improvement program.

A Brief Context of Evaluation in OD

One of the arguments that reinforces practitioner resistance to measurement is that the “set of planned, information gathering, and analytical activities” that make up evaluation, according to Beckhard and Harris’s classic definition (1977, p. 86), often do not match—or appropriately measure—the spirit or the reality of complex interventions. They reduce a suite of complex activities and subjective interactions to a set of figures, or an arbitrary “objective” symbol such as dollar sign or a dot on a graph (Beckhard & Harris, 1977).

The argument within OD that favours measurement and quantification places evaluation at the heart of process interventions, with clear benefits to the practitioner and to the client. Being able to provide sound evidence of what has been achieved as a result of OD intervention equips the practitioner to demonstrate the substantive worth of OD efforts and to promote the practices of OD more concretely (Cheung-Judge & Holbeche, 2011).

The action research approach has left a strong legacy by articulating the benefits of pairing research with action in the cycle of diagnosing, planning, action
taking/execution, and evaluating. More profoundly, it recognizes the emotional investment and commitment that is made by those who play a role or contribute in some way to the process (Cheung-Judge & Holbeche, 2011, p. 109).

The learning organization approach positions data collection and assessment as crucial activities in organizational transformation and change: “the learning organization [embeds] systems to capture and share learning” (Watkins & Marsick, 1993, pp. 8/9; also Dixon, 1994; Pedler & Aspinwall, 1998; Senge, 1990, amongst many).

The writings of Jack Philips provide conceptual and practical help to the arena of evaluation and quantification of the impact of Learning and Development and OD. Good evaluative process is ensured by a client’s clarity on what they want to achieve, which is of course best practice at the start of any project. Creating a framework for evaluation challenges client and consultant to greater clarity and specificity (Philips, 2007).

The improvement team described in this article did not refer to Philips before setting out on their work, but a tribute to his understanding of the uses of evaluation is that elements he flags as benefits can be seen at play throughout the duration of the work. Amongst the purposes that Philips details, those demonstrated in this article are to “reinforce major points made to the participants” during training, to “establish a data base which can assist management making decisions,” and to “determine if the program was appropriate” (Philips, 2007, pp. 42-43). This latter function was in play early on in the data collection to get a sense of what Dannemiller calls dissatisfaction in the system (Dangler, 2000) and later to illuminate the degree to which the training was deemed appropriate and helpful by a highly educated staff group.

Context and Setting
Pressures in the pharmaceutical industry to (a) expedite the availability of new therapies to patients, and (b) increase return on investment have shown no signs of diminishing. In research divisions, the emphasis is on finding or creating ways to optimize expert input, scientific judgement, and personal contribution in project teams. However, staff operate in project teams within a divisional line structure and this produces the tensions seen when line and matrix work environments co-exist. The overall intention of the OD initiative described herein was to instil a culture, mentality, and practices consistent with those of high performing teams that would support improved integration of the departments, or project team members having to refer back to departments rather than being empowered to respond to project needs.

Finally, but not insignificantly, one of the characteristics of this upstream division is that early fail projects are dropped and the team is then dissolved. A ramification of this rapid turnover is that some staff never go beyond the early team stage, and may work for a long time in the division . . . the differences between Executive Team members were played out in the predictable difficulties that occur when project work operates within a line management structure—for example poor communication between departments, or project team members having to refer back to departments rather than being empowered to respond to project needs.

without the experience of participating in a well functioning, fruitful matrix project team.

The consequences of these factors are greater than they might seem at face value. Rather like NASA that relies for the success of its space research on the well co-ordinated efforts of its specialist teams (Pellerin, 2009), this entire pharmaceutical business depends on how quickly and effectively the CD project teams work and integrate their contribution to the development of new products. Like premier league football players, each of the scientific specialists in CD needs to be able to hit the field running, quickly develop a view on what’s needed from them, and contribute their best to the project team for as long as they are on the field.

Early Moves to Improve Performance
The first round of intervention to improve project team performance was a training program to equip senior scientists and project leaders with an understanding of and skills for running effective teams. While attendance at the presentation-style workshops was high, positive impact was not evidenced in individual or team behaviors. Ineffective communication,
for example, continued to be a problem between departmental groups in the division, a simple but serious issue where partnership ought to be the norm. When, based on observable evidence, this presentation-based program was not judged to have achieved sufficient changes in project team behaviours necessary for better integration of component disciplines, a High Performance Team (HPT) initiative was established.

A small internal HPT team was set up. The team’s first activity was to (in their words) grab data from all CD staff on what was important, what was problematic, and what was needed to achieve significant improvement in the way project teams worked. This marked the start of dedicated gathering of quantitative and qualitative data from CD staff that provided input and guidance to all subsequent stages of the HPT program.

At each step of the program data collection, analysis, distillation, and feedback were used to move the improvement campaign forward. The team varied their approach in each step. They adapted their methods to content, to what would be most effective for keeping staff interested and involved in contributing, and to ensure the material they were examining served both the wants and needs of staff and the progress of HPT for improved project team work.

Measures and Metrics at Each Stage to Progress the OD Aims

The HPT team began their collection of data on the impact of the first round of training using instant messaging to conduct on-line brainstorms (the team would type in questions and staff responded in real time on-line), conference calls with project leaders, and focus groups. The aim of these activities was to redefine from the staff perspective what was needed to achieve significant improvement in project team function. The team printed out individually 1,000+ responses, and categorised them with post-its on a wall. They repeated this affinitizing process a second time, and this was followed by root cause analysis, to identify interrelatedness and connections between factors.

The Problem Statement the team produced, below, then served as a touchstone from that point throughout all subsequent activities.

The Problem Statement:

- High Performance Team Ways of Working were not fully rolled out.
- Need a common set of tools for project teams to use.
- Need a better understanding of skills needed in high performing teams.
- Team performance is not measured.
- Need to recognise different approaches for different success criteria.
- Need better understanding of expectations for each team member.
- Responsibility for “how” projects are delivered is not clear.
- There is no common mechanism to identify and reward good behaviors.
- Need to generate a better environment for effective feedback.

Using Data Collection to Sharpen Staff Focus over Time

A second wave of training took place, this time for project managers and project leaders, in hard and soft project management skills. This training was more interactive. Staying with their aim of grabbing data from staff, the team evaluated this training intervention in two ways:

1. Conventional end of training course questionnaire evaluations: Content (too much, little, just right); Design (exercises, presentation, balance of materials); Facilitator assessment. (What did you like best? What would you change?). There was an opportunity for both written and scoring feedback.
2. The HPT team informally surveyed staff as to whether they were detecting differences in project team leadership behaviors. They did this with small groups or individually—literally over lunch or coffee.

The training was deemed generally beneficial, and the messages from all staff were becoming more focused. What was expressed on a wide scale was that in order to have more effective project team work—High Performing Teams—everyone should be equipped with team effectiveness training. The team summarized two key messages from this round of data collection:

1. Traditional training of leadership tier was not enough for significant impact on team function.
2. Good practices needed to be embedded throughout the project matrix community to establish a culture founded on sound project management skills, constructive practices, and good team work.

This finding precipitated a meeting between the Executive Team sponsor, the HPT team lead, HR for CD, and an external OD consultant. This meeting produced a detailed clarification of the features of the desired HTP culture. The clarification drew from sound project management concepts, constructive practices, good team work, and the staff views expressed in the first rounds of data collection (Pegg Jones & Standish, 2006). Key desired outputs were:

- All team members, not only project managers or leaders, know and apply a consistent approach.
- Agreement across CD of what constitutes good project management and good team work.
- Team members challenge one another, ask for help, and bring up difficulties in team working readily, rather than wait till serious problems arise.
- The gap between project managers and team members’ bosses is characterized by a creative tension rather than a problematic one.
- Measurements would be employed that are meaningful for the nature of the work.
- A project team is an assignment during which team members expect to develop and to contribute to the development of their fellow team members, as well as to deliver an outcome.
Given that CD was cross-functional and spread across five global sites, and the executive sponsor’s previous experience with large group interventions (LGI) to combine staff development, agreement on organizational principles, and focusing a large number of staff on strategic and practical issues, LGI was selected as the means for:

» Embedding the learning from the earlier workshops across all levels within the staff system.
» Staff to develop a shared model of how High Performance Teams would operate across CD.
» Clarifying the intended benefits (for CD staff and CD output) of working to an HPT model, and to regard those benefits as aims.
» Generating ideas for making the approach part of everyday operations and a plan for taking it forward.

In order to structure discussion in the Executive Team meeting to decide how to improve integration of component disciplines, the OD consultant interviewed Executive Team members using the same questions the team had used with staff: what the problems were, what was needed, and what were potential solutions. The purpose of these interviews was to create an agreed agenda for change. The input to the Executive Team discussion was based on findings from the one-to-one interviews, on key issues that emerged from staff’s end of training questionnaires, and anecdotal evidence. The outcome was:

» Executive Team accord on concerns and aims.
» Commitment to a division-wide activity to tackle project team performance.
» Establishment of a global Design Team for an LGI.
» Lead on HPT team was named as Team Leader of the LGI Design Team to ensure continuity of HPT approach, and that findings from staff are integrated in LGI design.

Team Surveys

At the same time as the LGI was being planned and carried out, a Team Survey was being conducted. This survey was deemed another route to continue staff involvement and to keep up the momentum of the program. It was designed by the HPT team seeking to discover: 1) what would success look like? and 2) what questions do we have to ask to help us get there? They set out simply to find out staff perceptions of behaviors in their team, how the team operated and planned, how the team communicated, and an assessment of the team leader performance.

The challenge was how to glean useful material from the data gathered. The survey team was comprised of a knowledge management expert, a professional in performance analysis and metrics, a chemist who was responsible for change management in CD, and a senior research scientist. The data was presented graphically and with verbatim comments. The slides show the questions asked and presentation of findings. (See the slides next page.)

Additional value was generated through discussions of the survey results within section and project teams, which fostered in-depth clarification, understanding, and scrutiny of consequences. It also enabled teams to follow changes, snags, and impact of the HPT program. The information helped the HPT team fine-tune some of the issues as LGIs got underway, by showing where to give emphasis—either regionally or departmentally across the division.

The LGI was designed by a virtual cross-function/grade/site Design Team whose 16 members were based in the UK, US, and Europe. The same team led the 7 LGIs that covered all the sites, each a full day event attended by between 60–160 members of CD staff. The events were opened with a statement (in person or by video) from the divisional senior vice-president welcoming all to the event, and stressing that the aim was to draw a line under variable understandings of what constituted high performing teamwork, and to focus everyone’s attention on the behaviors that would embed HPT in CD. Two CD Executive Team members personally hosted each event to demonstrate support and to answer queries that arose.

The explicit purposes of the events were: (1) encouraging all to revitalize and improve the performance of Project Teams; (2) providing personal and professional development; and (3) exploring team working in CD. To achieve this the Design Team maintained specific fundamental themes for the day: diversity, learning from how we work together, self-diagnosis/awareness, shared understanding of what we mean, team development, personal behaviors, guidelines, and future reinforcement. The event also upheld the balance that characterized all the preceding data collection and feedback activities by taking into consideration the personal, the professional, and the cultural qualities of a highly educated scientific population. After 7 weeks, 92% of the division (plus peripherals whose work was integral to CD) had attended an LGI.

Once the LGIs began, Team Survey findings were dovetailed with material that was collected at LGI table discussions. The team used this collective material for a re-look at the Problem Statement. The Progress Check slide shows how the Problem Statement, which had not altered...
Survey Questions (1)

Section 1 Team Behaviours
Q1: Does your team feel like it has a leader who leads and who trusts team members to deliver?
Q2: Does your team feel like it involves members in transparent problem-solving and decision making procedures?
Q3: Does your team feel like it has team members empowered by their lines to be functional leads?
Q4: Does your team feel like it has the right attitude and mindset to deliver?
Q5: Does your team feel like it is rewarded for the excellence of its science and the joint success of the team?
Q6: Does your team feel like it critiques the way it works regularly and practices continuous improvement?
Q7: Does your team feel like it builds relationships for trust and respect?
Q8: Does your team feel like it is committed to its task, motivated to succeed, and proud of what it achieves?
Responses for this Section: Always; Most of the time; Some of the time; Occasionally; Never; No opportunity

Section 2 Team Operations and Planning
Q1: Does your team have shared objectives to ensure effective development of a successful drug product?
Q2: Does your team think and plan thoroughly before acting to ensure the correct balance between quality and speed?
Q3: Does your team use its resources effectively?
Q4: Does your team provide constructive feedback to line teams on team member / leader performance?
Q5: Does your team seek guidance where it lacks experience in science or team-working?
Q6: Does your team address unexpected issues effectively?
Responses for this Section: Strongly agree; Agree; Partially agree; Disagree; Strongly disagree; No opportunity

Survey Questions (2)

Section 3 Team Communications
Q1: Does your team organize regular communication: as appropriate ensuring that the right people, who have the accountability for decisions and actions are involved?
Q2: Does your team communicate effectively in and outside the team in a timely fashion?
Q3: Does your team consider the views of others? Support and encourage new ideas and suggestions?
Q4: Does your team proactively communicate risks/issues within the team?
Responses for this Section: Strongly agree; Agree; Partially agree; Disagree; Strongly disagree; No opportunity

Section 4 Project Leader Performance
Q1: How well does the Project Leader motivate and inspire the project team to deliver with urgency and commitment?
Q2: How well does the Project Leader act as a role model for HPT behaviours within the team, encouraging team members to follow similar good practice?
Q3: How well does the Project Leader clarify, with each HPT member, individual objectives and expectations for technical and behavioural competence?
Q4: How well does the Project Leader monitor team member performance and rewards and/or recognizes outstanding performance with the team?
Responses for this Section: Outstanding/Innovator; Strength; Proficient; Learning; Development need; No opportunity
Progress Check on the Problem Statements

- HPT Ways of Working were not fully rolled out
- Need a common set of tools for project teams to use
- Need a better understanding of skills needed in high performing teams
- Team performance is not measured
- Need to recognize different approaches for different success criteria
- Need better understanding of expectations for each team member
- Responsibility for ‘how' projects are delivered is not clear
- There is no common mechanism to identify and reward good behaviours
- Need to generate a better environment for effective feedback

Overall Survey Results

Highest scoring questions
- S1 Q1: Does your team feel like it has a leader who leads and who trusts team members to deliver?
- S1 Q4: Does your team feel like it has the right attitude and mindset to deliver?
- S1 Q8: Does your team feel like it is committed to its task, motivated to succeed and proud of what it achieves?
significantly since the original formulation based on the brainstorms and conference calls, demonstrated to CD staff the degree to which HPT was progressing, as perceived by staff across the division.

**Maintaining the Drum Beat**

In the wake of the LGI and the Team Survey, the team worked to the principle of not giving staff a chance not to remember what HPT was about, why HPT continued to be important, and most pointedly, what the overall staff group continued to say about how well the section and project teams were functioning. The team “used what we had” from the output of the LGI, and the findings of the team Survey, to on a regular basis:

- Provide ongoing updates and feedback to Executive Team meetings to keep HPT on the Executive Team’s agenda.
- Provide ongoing updates and feedback to section and project team meetings for improvement discussions at team levels. Emphasis was on the data, on behaviors, and on High Performance Team working.
- Make available the material that had been part of HPT in a toolkit—incorporating both findings from staff and training input on HPT.
- Assess outstanding issues, always based on the Problem Statement so that progress could be tracked.

A toolkit was assembled to facilitate individual and team development. It included: modules for team development, produced with a design principle of 20% of material for presentation with 80% of the time allotted for team discussion; practical tools (for example RACI, stakeholder management); and reference materials for individual study. The aims were to: 1) keep HPT concepts on regular team meeting agendas; 2) ensure that teams had the means to implement solutions to their issues or improve their team working; and 3) provide resources for individual learning.

Emphasis throughout was twofold: that everyone should be exposed to HPT and to project leadership training, and that good practices needed to be embedded throughout the project matrix community to establish a culture founded on sound project management skills, constructive practices, and good team working.

**Reflections and Important Factors**

What impressed the OD consultant about this work was that the HPT team, having used their data to formulate a Problem Statement, valued the data as a clear statement from staff, and held it as a touchstone for progress. Using material collected at LGIs to show progress and to keep discussion current is not revolutionary. Like all energy of the team shifted to upholding the Problem Statement and the aims of HPT as CD culture, not giving staff a chance not to remember, to providing materials that would help team development and learning, and marking progress and applications throughout. The team held the narrative of this change effort from the very start of the venture through to the present, and they used all their measures and their analyses to that end.

From the scientific co-author is acknowledgement that measuring elements of an OD program is difficult but not impossible. It was seriously important...
A change program of this sort requires a long term approach. Continuity and interest were critical at different levels of the CD system. It is not possible to write about the team without stressing senior sponsorship. This work had visible, enthusiastic sponsorship from the same senior manager who set up the HPT initiative. He helped keep a high profile of the work at all levels of the organization, and ensured that the less enthusiastic were acquiescing not blocking.

At the start of the work there were complaints about lack of leadership and team function. The view in CD at time of writing is that the division has shifted mindset and practice on team working and responsible leadership at all levels. The principles of experiential learning in contrast to lecture-based instruction have been a major change factor in the culture change and team improvement. Now the scientific staff in CD expect some emphasis on soft skills and interactive learning. This is a big change from previously. There is a core of people who have discovered and utilise the softer skills and with that, there is broader appreciation of the value of qualitative data.

This kind of culture change does not have a natural close. A reorganization of CD altered the structure and size of the division, but the move towards HPT continues. At time of writing there is a small group of staff who are able to facilitate ongoing project team improvement effectively—with respectable evaluation ratings and positive feedback. The team continues its aim to reach as many research scientists as it can in the division.

“We’ll never complete this work in a scientific sense—a reduction in activity will merely reflect priority.”

References


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By ensuring a focus on leadership development, talent development, and talent assessment as part of a succession planning process it is possible to develop an organization’s future agility and culture through the approach we take to change.

Using Change to Stretch Talent, Achieve Real Time Leadership Development and Change Culture

By Gifford Tanser and Penny Lee

Introduction

Any situation of change in an organization can be used as an opportunity to implement effective OD/change management and to get an integrated set of benefits that can be harvested in the future. By ensuring a focus on leadership development, talent development, and talent assessment as part of a succession planning process it is possible to develop an organization’s future agility and culture through the approach we take to change. In this article we will describe how our organization is using just such an approach to ensure we will have sustainable capabilities for managing anticipated future change. We will cover:

» The Organization
» The Background to Our Change Situation
» How Choosing the Right Approach is Vital to Our Success
» The Chosen Change Approach and Talent Management
» The Types of Development Technique We Used
» The Culture Change and Benefits We Have Achieved
» Conclusion

The Organization

Boehringer Ingelheim (BI) is a family owned company with 44,000 employees worldwide and 700 in the UK and Ireland where we have had a presence for over 50 years. Our products have long been highly successful in the treatment of respiratory, cardiovascular, central nervous system, and virological disorders. Recently, we have intensified our research into the immune system, viral disease, and cancer. The main purpose of the UK and Ireland pharmaceutical organization is the sales, marketing, and distribution of our medicines.

Even though we have a relatively small workforce in the UK and Ireland, we face very interesting challenges when we embark on any changes for the following reasons.

First, in its previous 50 years BI had undergone organic growth with little of the turmoil that our competitors had experienced through mergers and acquisitions, and with many long serving employees there was little experience in the organization of complex change. It was not until 2009 when we had significant redundancies in response to changes in BI’s therapeutic areas that the employees experienced organization-wide change. These redundancies were predominantly handled based on our values as an organization rather than our change capability. Since our values are so strong they were carried out very well and this became known as the “BI way.” The BI way was essentially a label given to the cultural approach (respectful of the individual) that was taken.

Second, BI’s UK and Ireland business is responsible for five divergent markets (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, and Ireland) each with different cultures and unique healthcare systems, the majority characterized by the principle that healthcare should be free at the point of need.
Third, the UK and Ireland are sandwiched both geographically and culturally between the US and mainland Europe—one which has a highly individualistic approach and the other that, in general, has a social model that encourages employee participation often through formal and legally required co-determination with works councils (elected employee representatives who negotiate with their company on employee related matters and may also have a strong legal role in the commercial decisions a company makes). This pull between these two different worlds is keenly felt by the UK and Ireland operations of a German organization. The UK, which is part of the European Union, has seen the demise in the influence of trade unions and their negotiation power over the last 30 years. Our employees are aware of the legal rights of their colleagues in the rest of Europe and yet culturally do not demand these rights for themselves. In this contrasting context, OD techniques help to bridge these two different worlds. A systemic, co-creation approach using large scale interventions may give each employee a stronger individual voice than they might expect in a co-determination environment.

The Background to Our Change Situation

As mentioned earlier, the main purpose of the UK and Ireland operation is the sales, marketing, and distribution of BMS medicines. Similar to many markets around the world BMS has for many decades operated a “share of voice” sales model. The sales representative’s role is to gain access to prescribers to raise their awareness of a particular medicine and ensure the prescriber knows the most effective way to utilize the Company’s medicines. They will ensure that the prescriber is aware of a particular disease or therapeutic area and the treatments that are available.

The current economic crisis has, however prompted Governments around the world to look at both their costs of medicine and their healthcare systems. Anticipating this, early in 2011 our markets started to undergo fundamental change. In Ireland significant cost reductions were agreed upon with the industry. In England, the Government announced its intention, from April 2013, to devolve budgets and decision making (what medicines a doctor is allowed to prescribe) from large, regionalized Primary Care Trusts to localized prescribers (Clinical Commissioning Groups—CCGs). This could fundamentally change the nature of the discussions that sales representatives have with doctors and the CCGs from the current style of information provision to a future business negotiation model.

With a market undergoing significant and ongoing change and a tumultuous economic environment it became clear to BMS that a Strategic Review of the business was required. The Review not only aimed to deliver specific actions to tackle the anticipated changes needed to the business model, but more importantly we wanted to prepare the organization, its leaders, and future leaders to thrive in a new context.

Each of the 5 markets were diverging in nature (with England accelerating in a different direction from the other 4 markets) and our current one size fits all operating model would no longer be suitable in the long term. If we were entering a period of volatility, complexity, uncertainty, and ambiguity how should we ensure our organization is able to respond appropriately?

With a market undergoing significant and ongoing change and a tumultuous economic environment it became clear to BMS that a Strategic Review of the business was required. The Review not only aimed to deliver specific actions to tackle the anticipated changes needed to the business model, but more importantly we wanted to prepare the organization, its leaders, and future leaders to thrive in a new context. In the long term it will be this ability that will determine the ongoing success of our organization.

Choosing the Right Approach was Vital to Our Success

Knowing how critical and complex this change would be, the Country Managing Director, HR Director, and senior team responses and as a consequence the culture change that organizations crave is not realized.

1. The lack of system thinking—without taking a whole system perspective in our world of five diverse markets we would have a myopic view. This, coupled with the impatience for change, means a wide cross section of the organization is not involved in identifying and developing the change.

2. Top down communication—change is often rolled out through traditional presentations, communications, implementation workshops, and leadership development programs. On these programs leaders are implored to work in a new way with little emotional involvement in initially designing the change. Most importantly they do not practice the skills that will allow them to develop the organization through any future change. The rich opportunities of involving a wide range of current and future leaders to maximize sometimes once in a lifetime development experiences are lost to the organization.

3. Lack of engagement to support successful implementation—leaders fail to engage their whole organization in the design of the response to change. Not only does this result in a lack of engagement, but they also lose out on any development opportunities and the leader does not experience the capacity for change that is inherent in all workforces.
4. **Task focus rather than behavioural focus**—A critical long term consequence of the traditional change approach is the lack of attention given to involving those who are key in supporting successful implementation. Co-constructing, experimenting and, therefore, developing new types of mindset and behaviour that will support and sustain the transformational change are just as important as designing the detailed nitty gritty of the change.

With the above reasons it is no wonder that research conducted by McKinsey and others tell us that 70% of change efforts fail to deliver the estimated benefits. By resisting the easy way of calling in the experts and parachuting them into a business, we had to look elsewhere for a different approach.

Designing and running large scale data gathering or AI events exposed the team members to the power of the use of self. They witnessed the people in the room defining the change that was required in the organization without the need for top down leadership decree. It gave the teams a powerful message that, through the careful crafting of questions and process, they could achieve their aims in a sustainable way.

With some external OD support the approach we have chosen has the following core elements in the change design:

1. Co-creation to quickly embed learned behaviors and deliver real time leadership development.
2. Interventions at multiple levels within the organization to buy-in stakeholders and develop and assess talent.
3. The use of systemic approaches to ensure the development individuals acquired could be sustained across the whole of the organization and as a result build our culture.
4. To widen the engagement circle by involving more and more people.

Once we agreed on these principles, we decided we wanted to go even further and accomplish four further objectives:

1. Identify emerging talents to grow, develop, and to assess their range of capabilities.
2. Give these people a strategic view of the business by working in cross functional teams.
3. Give them real time leadership development.
4. Secure robust data for succession planning.

**The Chosen Change Approach and Talent Management**

Initially the management team and a cross section of 30 employees worked with a Futurologist to define possible future market scenarios and from these identified eight questions to be covered by the Strategic Review. The Review was called Painting BI’s Future (PBIF); the questions were called Canvases, each Canvas was led by a Canvas Lead (emerging talent) and the overall program was led by a project manager called a Gallery Curator. She reported to a Steering Group with the Managing Director as the ultimate art buyer who owned the overall commission for the anticipated exhibition of recommendations.

Our global talent process was used to identify Canvas Team members. The process codifies all employees and identifies talented individuals; this data was used as the initial sift for nominations. Functional knowledge was not a significant factor in our decision; instead we considered how an individual would be stretched, how it fit with their development objectives, and what data it would give us for succession planning purposes. Most importantly of all we wanted a diversity of experience and personality to ensure a fresh approach to the Review.

Key elements in the design were:

**The Eight Canvases**:

1. Clinical Commissioning Groups: How can the Company respond to these new groups?
2. Five diverse markets: What are the implications and required response to a divergent marketplace?
3. Technology: What are our customers’ requirements and how should technology be used to address these?
4. Stakeholders: What is the changing external stakeholder landscape and how should BI respond?
5. Value Based Pricing: How can the organization prepare for a new pharmaceutical pricing model in the UK?
6. Patient Power: What is the changing role of patient groups within our markets and an appropriate mechanism for responding to them?
7. Beyond Pills: What expectations, in addition to the efficacy of our medicines, will our customers have of us as a valued supplier?
8. Organizational agility in a VUCA world (volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous): What are the characteristics and how can we ensure BI is an agile organization?

Towards the end of the Review a team (the Picasso team) pulled from members of each Canvas was asked to produce an integrated set of overall Company-wide recommendations. For example, what type of organization structure would be needed in the future?

**Canvas team structure**: A member of the management team was assigned as a sponsor for each Canvas. In addition to each Canvas Lead, teams varied in size from the smallest of 3 to the largest of 7 people, dependent on the scale of their task. The teams self organized and during the life of the Review a number of Leads and team members changed with no detrimental effect on team performance. Over 50 employees were involved.
Deliverables: Each team agreed upon their detailed Canvas scope with their Sponsor prior to the management team signing off the full set. The management team ensured the scope was in line with their original commission and that they integrated across the Canvases. Each team was asked to produce a set of costed recommendations, having systemically analyzed the situation.

Events: To underline the systemic nature of the project and to ensure alignment between the teams the following cross Canvas workshops were held over a period of 7 months:
- Initial scenario planning workshop
- Kick-off meeting for the teams
- Canvas scope sign off meeting
- Development input on systems thinking
- Creation of a BI Systems Model
- Two status update meetings
- Final exhibition followed by a team closure event to embed learning
- Numerous large scale interventions that allowed all employees to participate in some part of the Review.

Governance: The Steering Group (Management team) acted as sponsors for each Canvas. The Gallery Curator joined the management team for the duration of the project. In addition, a traditional management consultant joined the Steering Group and worked with each of the teams to provide guidance on how to complete some of their technical tasks.

Development support: Throughout the review, the Canvas Leads and the Steering Group were encouraged and supported to experiment with, and, therefore, embed new ways of working, witnessing their power and building confidence for their use in the future.

The unusual language was deliberately chosen to indicate to the organization that the review was to be undertaken in a very different style and required brave and innovative thinking. We wanted to signal that the Canvas Teams had a blank canvas on which to create their recommendations. Their Canvas Scopes (co-created commission) tightly framed and determined their artistic freedom and the resources and timescales they were given (the pots of paint) ensured their recommendations were in keeping with their commission. The OD cycle was built into the Review through the planned provision of workshops at key points prompting systems thinking, data gathering, large scale interventions, and co-creation. The final presentations were held at the iconic Tate Modern Museum (of modern art) in London with an exhibition (presentation of recommendations) to the Steering Group, Country Managing Director, and Corporate colleagues from Germany.

The Types of Development Techniques Used

Our change approach created a unique opportunity to see how our talent coped with an ambiguous situation and who was willing to embrace and experiment with new ways of working. Sponsors for each of the Canvases were also exposed to talent within the organization that they would not normally work with day to day. This helped to enrich our succession planning discussions and will enable future cross functional moves.

We let emergent business needs and events drive our development actions. A key moment came in late 2009 when we persuaded the UK and Ireland management team to attend a short seminar by Ed Schein when he spoke about Humble Inquiry and exposed them to new management thinking. So significant was this it allowed us to run a large scale Appreciative Inquiry (AI) event in 2010 and paved the way to PBIF in 2011. Humble Inquiry is now part of the organizational vernacular and is used by leaders and managers to refer to a broad range of AI, co-creation, or data gathering techniques.

The provision of just-in-time training and support sustained the energy and discretionary effort of the teams throughout the months of the Review. In addition to the events described above we provided leaders with pre-prepared presentations and speeches on systems thinking and why co-creation was important to them.

We created a supportive, developmental environment for the Canvas Leads to work in. They were provided with external coaches, who were OD practitioners themselves, and received just-in-time OD technique training. A traditional management consultant (who also joined the Steering Group) was made available to all the Canvas Teams to advise on their technical task. All members of the teams had the opportunity to experiment with and witness different ways of working. As a result, we are seeing the transfer of the learning back into the team members’ normal responsibilities and through to implementation.

Designing and running large scale data gathering or AI events exposed the team members to the power of the use of self. They witnessed the people in the room defining the change that was required in the organization without the need for top down leadership decree. It gave the teams a powerful message that, through the careful crafting of questions and process, they could achieve their aims in a sustainable way.

The teams were continuously encouraged to provide feedback and learning to each other with the aim of creating new networks. This was reinforced at the meeting in London where a half day was given over to the Canvas Teams to undertake personal reflection on their experience, provide feedback to each other and identify group and individual learning.

The Culture Change and Benefits We Have Achieved

We have never referred to the need for a culture change but PBIF will lead to a change in “the way we do things around here” (Ed Schein). Our organization has many long serving employees and tales get handed down to each new generation. We have created new heroes and heroines and we will have enduring stories about the great things that have happened. This was reinforced through the extensive use of video, allowing everyone to witness workshops and employees’ reactions.

Our culture is in the middle of change;
although this fledgling culture is still fragile we have seen:

» A new (more senior) implementation lead for phase two (Implementing BI’s Future—IBIF) embracing and experimenting with new (OD) ways of working.

» A core group of at least 10% of our population who actively accept and promote the need for changes in our ways of working. This has been observed by our Corporate colleagues: “How did you get these people to say and believe these things?”

» The teams were encouraged to use strengths based approaches to their tasks (for example in how they went about data gathering and the use of AI). As mentioned earlier, the term Humble Inquiry is used by the organization as shorthand for these techniques. This has been an antidote to a culture that is pervasive throughout many organizations of received wisdom and deficit approaches.

» Deep and wide data gathering, with an external orientation and corroboration from multiple sources, is a behavior that is being transferred from those parts of the business that have always done this (market research) and applied to areas where it was not traditionally seen.

In addition to culture change we have seen leadership development benefits and during the recent cycle of our talent management process the data from PBIF was actively used:

» The appointment of the full time implementation lead for IBIF was seen as a leadership development opportunity for the individual despite taking them away from a critical role in the middle of a product launch.

» Cross functional talent discussions were active and two-way with more unusual (than before) candidates identified as possible successors for roles outside of their normal functional silo.

» These talent discussions were used to identify those people who would developmentally benefit from leading a work stream in IBIF.

» Individuals have reported that the experience of working on PBIF has created effective and long lasting development which they believe will change the evolution of their careers.

» Our demand for external leadership development courses has reduced as employees are reporting that the experience on PBIF is fulfilling their development needs.

» We have provided leadership development at low cost by getting multiple benefits from team members getting experience whilst working on real work.

Conclusion

Our positive experience in PBIF has ensured that, as we move into implementation, the focus on leadership, talent, and culture development has taken on more significance. We believe that we will be able to further increase the return on investment from our change approach and embed capability in the organization by:

» Triad conversations for all those people involved in implementation teams (employee, manager, and HR) to identify from the outset the development individuals hope to get from their involvement and the support they will need. This will be reviewed at the end of IBIF to consolidate their learning, agree how they will use it in their ongoing role and identify ongoing development needs they have.

» Carrying out an even more detailed assessment and matching process to populate implementation teams, actively using data from our talent management process to match individual’s development needs with the outcomes expected from the implementation task.

» Investing in the development of the sponsors of the implementation teams, providing just-in-time training and input as the implementation tasks unfold and to ensure they are capable of providing the right support to their team members.

» Providing the implementation lead with OD support and coaching from an external expert, to give corroboration and reinforcement for the techniques they are experiencing and to consolidate their learning.

» Having a separate Implementation Team tasked with creating and implementing activities to embed agile behavior in our organization.

» Continuing to use evocative language, large scale interventions, and videos to signal a different style of managing change and to assist with employee engagement.

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Executive Development as an Organization Development Intervention at Standard Chartered Bank

By Drew Watson and Jonathan Cormack

Introduction

This paper outlines our developing thinking on how executive development can result in lasting organization development. Our practice in this area is evolving and our understanding of what does and does not work continues to emerge.

The terms leadership development and executive development are often used interchangeably and typically refer to development of the top 5% of an organization’s population. In Standard Chartered the term executive development applies to around 500 executives in a company of 87,000 so the proportion is significantly smaller.

It has to be said that as a UK organization with no home market there is a caution over imposing UK practices across multiple cultures predominately in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. While this bias exists we strive to go beyond the UK-centric approach—a task made easier by the fact that the Bank’s employees represent 120 different nationalities.

We will focus here on the context and current realities of our top development program, Leading the Journey, which is targeted at around 150 executives: those already occupying the most senior positions in Standard Chartered, and those with the potential to get there. We will use this intervention to explore the important link between executive development and organization development, particularly building leadership capability and cooperation, aligning strategic intent and culture, and tackling real change issues that impact on organization performance and effectiveness.

Context of Development at Standard Chartered Bank

During the past 9 years UK based Standard Chartered Bank has made record profits and growth year on year and was the only Bank during the crisis to be upgraded by all three of the main rating agencies. In 2011, the Bank lodged a strong $6.78B profit.

The Bank’s origins are linked with the history of the emerging trade routes. As far back as 1600 Britain was concerned about the monopoly of the spice trade by Holland and Portugal. The East India Trading Company was formed in response to enhance British interests in the Asia Pacific region. By the mid-19th century there were many concerns that the banks of the East India Trading Company were not representing the interests of British trade not least of all through the manipulation of foreign exchange rates. In 1853, Queen Victoria decided to charter a “trustworthy” Bank to represent the interests of British trade, and the interests of the host countries in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. A Scot, James Wilson, founded the Bank in 1853 and opened the first branches in Calcutta, Mumbai, Shanghai, Singapore, and Hong Kong by 1859.

The Bank has continued to grow and operate from a London HQ operating in and for Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. Standard Chartered had difficulties in the 1990’s including the Asian financial crisis of 1998. Moving into the new millennium
it was clear that strategy and performance had to build on the existing strong culture, values, and occasionally quoted quirkiness of the Bank. The assessment of the then CEO, Sir Mervyn Davies (now Lord Davies), was that the Bank was under-performing and needed to refocus, think differently and be clear about its direction. He personally approached Said Business School at Oxford University and asked for help in creating fresh thinking and alignment around performance through customized executive development. He saw collective learning as a vehicle for sustainable change in the organization. This was the birth of the link to organization development.

The link was cemented by the impact of the time the top leaders of the bank spent at Oxford where the classroom agenda included strategy, organization alignment, culture, and leadership. Time was dedicated to reflection, learning, challenge, and proposed actions. Out of the energy and disequilibrium of the series of programs the bank repositioned itself. It responded to a particular challenge of “can you state what you are about and how it all connects up on one page of paper?” Out of this challenge was born the one page strategic intent which by any other name was an alignment model that soon became the foundation of how the bank was to operate in the new era and begin to build the engines for growth and scale.

Perhaps the most critical provocation and enlightenment came from the work of Keith Ruddle, an Oxford Professor who formerly worked in the London’s financial sector. His inculcation of Journey Management built the bridge between the art of developing executives and making a difference to the way the organization operates. His questions for team discussion included, “Where are we on the journey? What are the next steps? Is the journey understood throughout the organization? Do we have an effective style and process for leading this change?”

This direct connection between engaging in executive education and changing leadership behaviors in a way that impacted organization performance was also at the heart of creating the levels of top end sponsorship that in 2009 supported a return to a rolling program of development for the top leaders.

The terminology of the current program, Leading the Journey, is no accident and links leadership to organization development and to personal development. Thus we have a program that is designed, at least in its most idealistic terms, as an intervention that impacts the individual, team, and organization levels and connects strongly to the context and intent of the Bank.

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Executive Development Principles

Bearing the context in mind there are three principles that have evolved over the past three or four years that are core and are particularly important within our approach to executive development:

» Leadership is key. The Group CEO has stated, “If we get leadership and culture right everything else will follow.” First, we again see the link being announced here around building conditions and capability as the source of financial performance and service to the wider world. From the beginning the stakes are high. If you come into the phases of an executive development program you are going to be shaping the Bank of the future and contemplating who you are going to be shaping the Bank of the company.

» Context over content. Understanding context and managing that context is fundamental to a successful business. We root our programs deep in the context of Standard Chartered and in the wider environment in which we operate now and in the future. While we see the benefit of third party case studies in providing alternative perspectives we focus more on applied learning to reinforce purpose and drive the current and future performance of our company.

» Conversation over presentation. Most things that happen come as a result of a conversation or a series of conversations. We work at reducing PowerPoint and being talked at in order to maximize time for conversation between delegates and, with varying degrees of success, we encourage external faculty to adopt the same approach. In this respect we seek to reinforce that a healthy organization has the capacity for conversations that make a difference whether in creating a strategy, challenging orthodoxies, or dealing with a crisis. In the longer term the nature and pattern of conversations amongst leaders will also influence the way things are done in the Bank and how others perceive it, such as clients and regulators.

Leading the Journey

Leading the Journey is now in its third year. It was initially developed for the Group’s Band 1 population, approximately 60 executives who collectively direct the affairs of the remaining 87,000 people. It has now been extended to selected talent from...
the next level who are regarded as having the greatest potential to succeed at the top. The objectives of the program have remained the same since its inception and are:

- **Continue to create a common language.** What are the key words, the central concepts, the core beliefs that will become the touchstones of the next phase of Standard Chartered’s journey? This goes to the capacity for an internationally diverse organization to speak in the same terms regardless of local differences.

- **Reinforce our leaders’ role as guardians of the Bank’s distinctive culture.** What should each leader be doing to ensure we continue to model and promote our values? How do we build culture by our ongoing dialogues and what do we do rather than a centralised campaign?

- **Explore and address some of the business and adaptive issues that affect the Group.** We face some big, difficult issues that are hard to frame; let alone to resolve. What collective stance should the Group take on these critical issues? This takes us back to recognizing that the real world is begging for real solutions and the small group of individuals that make up the Board or the CEO’s executive group do not have all the answers. In effect the community needs to be wider and leaders at all levels need to take accountability beyond their immediate objectives.

- **Reconsider and redefine each leader’s personal journey.** The Bank has changed dramatically. Is each leader changing fast enough to continue to be out in front, leading the way and responding to wider and greater challenges? This is an invitation for all leaders to ask: Where am I in all of this? What is really important to me as a whole person?

The program has a pre-phase and a post phase and runs over five days and, to date, has been hosted in London to enable strong participation of the Group’s General Management Committee (GMC), which is the Bank’s top management team, as well as the active inclusion of the Board of Directors in the conversations. It is also this group, the GMC, who first commissioned the proposal paper from Executive Development and then gave it their blessing and funding.

To ensure the focus on the objectives is continuous a group of six highly skilled leadership effectiveness facilitators are employed by the bank to work individually with each delegate before, during, and after the program. This is seen as essential if the classroom is to bridge to individual, team, and organization health and performance.

**Continuously Designing**

The program continuously evolves with strong support and input from past delegates and the CEO and top management team. The credibility of this work is reflected in real and visible examples of true collaborative working within a geographically dispersed organization.

The program has also received very strong participant feedback from the start and also from its sponsors. By demonstrating its evolution, we aim to illustrate the critical success factors and lessons learned over several iterations of the program.

What then are the design elements that keep our attention on the executive development and organization development link? How do we attempt to serve the development of leaders and the shaping of the organization at the same time? There are a number of features to consider:

- **An influential guiding coalition:** We have a steering group for Leading the Journey which includes our two Group Business CEOs (Wholesale and Consumer Banking), Group Finance Director, and Group HR Director. This body meets regularly and actively to review, design, evaluate performance, and ensure alignment to the key issues of the Group. There is a real sense of the program being under a spotlight. The reason for this is that it is seen as a vehicle for collective ambition and for shaping change.

- **Top management team participation in the program:** We have always had strong involvement of the CEO and his direct reports in Leading the Journey. In November 2011 we extended this to have our top leaders pair with external faculty to co-facilitate key elements of the core curriculum. This has had a number of benefits including: even greater visible levels of sponsorship for the program; more lively, context rich discussions, and further development of the leaders who are stepping into the role of facilitator. There is no doubt some internal/external combinations work better than others but we feel this is worth persevering with, particularly as we learn how to make it an increasingly effective way of stimulating thought and discussion.

**Minimizing the theory:** One of the principles cited earlier is “Context over Content.” We have continually sought to reduce the formal input from external faculty. This has not always been easy and we have found that it is imperative to partner with people who are able to work “in the moment” and are willing to step away from favored scripts or case studies. They also need to be prepared to play a truly facilitative role within conversations. This necessitates a change in style for some, away from “edutainment” and into a less teacher-centric model. Not everyone is able to adjust to this way of working but those who can leave their egos at the door do well. By this approach we are reminded that this is about learning with a sense of purpose.

**Focusing on real business issues:** Leading the Journey is built around two intertwined pillars: personal journey and corporate journey. For the latter, we focus on big challenges that face the Group, drawing upon the work of Richard Pascale and Ron Heifetz who explore the relationship between adaptive and technical challenges and stimulate thinking on the nature of adaptive leadership in relation to discontinuous change. Both facilitate during our executive programs and have enough history and connection with the Bank to make it real.
In earlier incarnations of Leading the Journey, topics for adaptive challenges were already identified for the participants by the Group CEO. In recent programs we have shifted to the participants identifying the challenges for themselves. This additional white space places greater personal leadership responsibility on delegates to surface openly the most critical challenges and opportunities and how these should be moved forward.

From issues into action: In the first iterations of the program the delegates were expected to work in their project groups well beyond the event itself and either resolve the issue or bring it into everyday business practices. In more recent programs, we have invited groups to self-form around the issues that they want to tackle, and then encouraged them (but not mandated) to continue to move the challenges forward after the program finishes. Clearly whether they do choose to do this or not is indicative in itself about their personal leadership accountability. It is too soon to assess the effect of this change; however the early signs are positive.

Personal journey: As well as corporate journey, Leading the Journey has personal journey as a core element. Personal journey invites leaders to reflect, in facilitated small groups, on their past, present, and future and the extent to which they can integrate these life phases. Sufficient time is given to enable participants to go deep and sometimes strong emotions surface. Also, leaders inevitably learn a huge amount from listening to the stories of others and these sessions are very highly rated at the end of each program. For many it is the first time in a long time that they have slowed down long enough to reflect on what the excitement and huge pressures of corporate life actually mean to them as individuals and what this tells them about how they will be effective people in the future.

When our CEO and members of the top team visit the program during the week, they also candidly and openly relate their personal journeys and are happy to engage in open dialogue about their stories. This sends a message that it is okay to talk about self and that a leader in today’s times will benefit from self-reflection and self-awareness.

The next generation of educators: The common language for talking about leadership and strategy is also emerging strongly. As mentioned, the concept of adaptive challenges and adaptive leadership is adopted widely across the Group. Equally, Gordon Hewitt of the Ross School at Michigan has consistently reinforced the language of “the challenging of orthodoxies and dominant logic.” At a more behavioral and interpersonal level the concept of the courageous conversation is in common usage again deriving from its use in executive development forums. This provides a platform for cascade and dissemination.

Apart from stronger bilateral relationships and cohesion across the attending groups, we have noticed that a number of leaders returning from Leading the Journey have begun to practice the ideas from the program with their own teams, for example sharing personal journeys has become popular and feeds well into engagement and teamwork.

We have now extended this during 2012 by asking alumni from Leading the Journey to co-facilitate with faculty on our wider executive and management development programs. Their active sponsorship of and participation in these programs will be the equivalent of the CEO and top team participating in Leading the Journey. Thus the effect cascades deeper into the organization and sponsorship for executive development as a means of organization development grows stronger. In this way the community widens.

Keeping it consistent and different: Every program has been different.

Whilst we have kept the golden threads of consistent language and concepts, we continue to test new ideas. For example, in November 2011 we invited a group of twenty high potential employees (at junior grades) to join the participants for a session. We ran a fish bowl where first the participants sat in a circle (surrounded on the outside by the high potentials) and discussed a question set for them by the high potentials. A discussion followed and the roles were then reversed with the participants putting a question to the high potentials to discuss.

The level of debate that these sessions engendered was inspiring to everyone involved and, as an intervention, has had wide reaching affects both through grapevine communication and through the mentoring and reverse mentoring relationships that have sprung up after the session.

This also creates a curiosity with delegates from earlier programs. As an example of this the CEO of Wholesale Banking and Group Head of Risk recently spent an afternoon with all the HQ Band 1’s updating them in an interactive session on adaptive leadership. Two of that group have since co-facilitated with Richard Pascale at our ongoing Oxford program.

The Next Stage of Leading the Journey?

When Leading the Journey got underway it was billed as a progression of interventions and not a one off program but first it had to prove the concept. This has now happened with the CEO and Steering Group having signed off on LTJ2. Interestingly one of the principles is that there will be no academic faculty. There will be discovery and dialogue. LTJ 2 will be a rolling program starting in China, then India, and then Africa over the space of two years. As well as creating the conditions for tackling issues and seeking innovative solutions these sessions will also take delegates to a much deeper understanding of the region they are visiting through conversations with diverse groups of individuals from different walks.
of life and a variety of discovery visits and experiences.

The leadership effectiveness facilitators will continue to work alongside the individual delegates and in many cases work with the leader in facilitating sessions with the leader’s team. Again, this takes the debate into the realms of what can be implemented and what insights can the team take from the journey of the leader.

The real story here, however, is about creating a critical mass of senior leaders who along the way are informing and impacting the health and direction of the organization. There are many good stories about this but it is not linear. It is closer to the emergence of a complex adaptive system where the interactions of the parts and the ultimate outcome of the whole are not entirely predictable but there is a sense that it is generally moving along in approximately the right direction. There is a flow but not necessarily a guarantee.

Reflection: ED to OD—A Natural Link

Traditionally, a sponsor would ask questions about an individual attending a program and what they had done differently as a result. The real story here, however, is about creating a critical mass of senior leaders who along the way are informing and impacting the health and direction of the organization. There are many good stories about this but it is not linear. It is closer to the emergence of a complex adaptive system where the interactions of the parts and the ultimate outcome of the whole are not entirely predictable but there is a sense that it is generally moving along in approximately the right direction. There is a flow but not necessarily a guarantee.

However, this new set of linkages and pathways amongst the most senior leaders reinforces the message of collective leadership and true collaboration.

In Harnessing Complexity, Robert Axelrod (2000, p. 7) states, “A system is complex when there are strong interactions among its elements, so that current events heavily influence the probabilities of many kinds of later events.” In this there is a realization, if one were needed, that organizations are no longer cause and effect entities. By “widening the community” the variety created builds essential conditions for innovation and change. By intention, LTJ widens the community and this cascades deeper into the organization.

On this basis, the means of achieving the developmental aims has moved considerably and deliberately in a decade. There is a real recognition that listening to gurus can be good but that in reality meaningful dialogue is at the heart of everything that happens in an organization. It is also at the heart of how individuals progress, connect and appreciate their place in a community or family. Such principles of learning and leadership apply across the board.

Is it fair to say that academic faculty and prestigious consultants often demonstrate the capacity to woo their audiences through clever models and interesting case studies? It has been entertaining and often very informative. However, at its worst it places participants as passive receivers of others’ wisdom. At its best it feeds into valuable white space in program design where delegates have more than ample time to reflect and engage in conversations that have significance to them and the organization.

In all of this it has to be said that we have not so much radically changed the entire delivery model as shifted the balance and emphasis in order that the link between learning and business performance is center stage and that the learning system engages the individual, the collective group, and the wider organization in what really matters.

Leading the Journey has taken us closest to our aspiration of executive development evolving into a lasting organization development intervention—one that engages fully with values, culture, and seeks context from the wider world whether that is water issues in China or the mobile phone explosion in Africa. The rebuilding of a common language enhances communication and sense making while we are seeing, in pockets, the program stimulating real and profound change in the way that Standard Chartered does business and lives its values.

However, our challenge now is to stimulate this more frequently and with greater impact. As our CEO said to participants during the last program, “No one is going to solve these challenges for you.” Now more than ever we need leaders who will take accountability including outside of their direct realms of authority.

Reflecting cumulative knowledge on adult learning, adults will learn what they want to learn and change what they want to change. Therefore, the more that learning can be self-directed—for example through conversations that participants choose to have—the greater the opportunities for real learning, self organized initiatives, and consequently real shifts in behavior. The more that we can shift executive development to a frontier where faculty are the enablers and delegates feel real ownership for driving the agenda, the greater the potential for us to shift to a true organization development approach.

We are exploring how this idea extends beyond the field of executive education. For example, we are now beginning to inculcate the same language and ideas into our major communications forums. Our executive briefing forums are shifting away from “show and tell” to putting challenges and questions out into the room rather than endeavoring to provide and control the answers.

As practitioners we are learning all the time and are continuously giving our attention to:

» looking to how we widen the influence of the program beyond the classroom;
» viewing it through the lens of complexity rather than linearity;
» keeping a strong focus on the link between learning and business performance;
» balancing corporate and personal journey recognizing that both aspects are critical to leaders who can shape successful change;
» building internal advocates and faculty to sustain the program’s impact; and
» actively involving the highest level of stakeholders in the ongoing development of the program and its offshoots.

When it comes down to it, Standard Chartered Bank has always invested strongly in executive development and Leading the Journey has now taken us closest to the aspiration of executive development evolving into a lasting organization development intervention. While it is always difficult to predict the next phase in the development of an emergent system, it is nonetheless clear that there is energy and impact being created that aligns strongly to the capacity to recognize and organize change at corporate, team, and individual levels. Even, or especially, in the traditional realms of banking the need for a response to escalating complexity and discontinuous change is palpable. The role of executive development in driving sustainable organization development is becoming clearer to all as the journey progresses.

References

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Walk Slow to Go Fast
How HEINEKEN uses the SEARCH Approach

By Dagmar Daubner and Andreas Priestland

Introduction
As manufacturing and production companies look to speed up their process using techniques such as LEAN, Six Sigma, phased production planning, etc., and deliver their products to market in ever shorter time, the pressure to sort out the associated changes more quickly also increases. As Guy Claxton states in his book *Hare Brain, Tortoise Mind* (1998):

> Within the Western mindset, time becomes a commodity, and one inevitable consequence is the urge to “think faster”: to solve problems and make decisions quickly. (p. 5)

This demand for pace is not always consistent with the time it takes for organizations, managers, and employees to make sense of, internalize, and then apply what is being asked of them. Large, international companies are looking for global processes that can be introduced in a sustainable way—that is, in a way that creates the capacity for the process to continue beyond the early enthusiasm of the initiator and embed itself into the on-going practices of the company. In addition, these companies are complex, multi-dimensional systems.

To create sustainable impact, change needs to engage at multiple levels. These various forces create a tension between those attempting to guide a process of change through engagement and involvement (walk slow), and the product delivery expectations of the wider organization (go fast). Creating the space needed for building sustainable change in a fast paced consumer industry is therefore often a challenge. We faced exactly this kind of environment when we were appointed to create a new leadership development program for HEINEKEN.

Background
HEINEKEN owns and manages one of the world’s leading portfolios of beer brands and is one of the leading brewers in terms of sales volume and profitability. One of HEINEKEN’s main business priorities is to drive personal leadership across the more than 70,000 employees in more than 70 countries. As the business grows in scale and complexity, people are a main source of competitive advantage. HEINEKEN requires them to think globally, work collaboratively together, and to inspire and develop themselves and others. Between 2008 and 2011, HEINEKEN has almost doubled its number of employees through major acquisitions. The market is competitive and challenging in terms of external economic and demographic trends. All of these factors contributed to the need to strengthen and refocus its internal HR processes to support the business strategy and to develop a common language in order to harness the wide geographical spread.

Given this business context, HEINEKEN reviewed its leadership development offer. One of the first interventions to strengthen the leadership pipeline concentrated on first-line managers. These employees are defined as individuals across the global organization, who are at
the first step in a management career at HEINEKEN, and who have accountability for managing two or more staff. This equates to more than 6,000 first-line managers across 5 Regions in more than 70 local operating companies spread around the world.

We received the mandate from HEINEKEN’s HR Leadership Team to design, lead, and co-ordinate the first-line manager project. One of us (Daubner) is a recently hired HEINEKEN employee with an industrial psychology background and experience of working for other organizations in Marketing and HR, and the other (Priestland) is an external OD consultant who has worked with large multi-national organizations previously and has successfully introduced global leadership programs. In addition to us, other project members were identified to contribute to the project as needed.

The Traditional Approach to Change

Similar to many businesses, the environment in HEINEKEN is one that pushes for fast pace and high quality output. Throughout the project, there was a struggle between this expectation of pace and the time it took to involve and include key sponsors and stakeholders, at multiple levels, in the development of the program. Frequently, this kind of push for delivery leads to a particular kind of linear approach to the implementation of any change process. Someone defines the issue in need of resolution; a small group who have “done this before” gets together and designs the solution; the operating companies are then told “the answer”; and the project is deemed to be implemented.

Through conversations with colleagues in different parts of the organization, we quickly discovered that taking this approach was not going to work. Previous initiatives from the head office were often seen as disconnected from the actual need, and the processes and products developed were pushed aside or ignored. From a local site perspective, the proposals seemed to be translated as being resistant by the head office. As the pressure builds, so the threat of enforcement increases and vicious cycles of resistance and enforcement are created.

Additionally, we discovered that the local operating companies were looking for recognition from the head office for their differing levels of experience in running their own development initiatives. They wanted commitment beyond the first few months in assisting them understanding the opportunity being presented, and help with implementing it in a way that suited their local conditions.

What is SEARCH and how was the Methodology Applied?

What does SEARCH stand for?
The acronym SEARCH stands for Systems Engagement and Action Research—a term we used to describe a process in which a variety of stakeholders are actively and deliberately involved throughout the multiple cycles of diagnosis, planning, action and evaluation. As the name suggests, SEARCH draws on elements of both Systems Engagement and Action Research.

1. Systems Engagement

This is an operating principle and methodology that maintains awareness of the wider system when dealing with its individual parts. Systems Engagement creates opportunities to get a representation of the system in the room, and it builds commitment as the process unfolds (Senge, 1990; Axelrod, 2000; Bunker & Alban, 2006). While it helps the client organization to learn more about the process it is going through, it also requires more time and input than selling a solution at the end that has been created in organizational isolation (Kantor, 2012).

2. Action Research

The applied Action Research approach comprises of an iterative process of diagnosing, planning, action, and evaluation (Lewin, 1946). Each cycle builds on the previous one and is problem and client centred. The characteristic action orientation creates opportunities to learn for all parties involved. Action Research aims to actively involve local partners in all project stages to ensure their commitment to supporting the change. Although the range of application for Action Research is wide, it is especially suited to situations where the desired state, or pathways to reach it, is unclear or ambiguous (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010). This made it a suitable project approach to develop a First-Line Manager Development Program in HEINEKEN.

In contrast to the linear project plan, we took the more time consuming but inclusive approach—represented in the SEARCH model diagram (Figure 1). This included repeated cycles of researching and testing ideas with stakeholders. Regular communication was an important part of this process. Conversations took place with employees at different locations, as they became part of the growing network of contributors. Through various forms of communication, the regular and steady progress could be followed, and those who had made inputs could see their influence on the project unfolding. Throughout, we...
highlighted additional opportunities for participation, which encouraged a more collective sense of ownership in the project.

Application of SEARCH to gain engagement
Figure 1 shows that the foundation for successful and sustainable projects is set early, through repeating cycles of commitment and engagement building. Our post-project review of the initiative identified four clear phases, each with an accompanying guiding principle and a set of key activities. These phases, principles, and activities are outlined in Table 1 and will be explained in more detail below.

### 1. Discovery through curiosity
This critical initial phase comprised of a significant amount of desk research as well as early exploration of the current state of leadership development provision for the more junior cadre of leaders in HEINEKEN. The team looked at some of the recent Leadership Education reports from the Corporate Leadership Council (2006) that explore the issue of transition for newly promoted first-line managers. Other sources included Unlocking the Value of On-the-Job Learning (CLC Learning & Development, 2010), the research carried out by Linda Hill in her book Becoming a Manager (2003), and experiences from the development of a first-line manager program in another multinational firm (Priestland & Hanig, 2006). This early work helped to underscore the value of supporting the individual going through the significant transition from individual contributor to line manager, reinforcing the case for the project. The discovery phase also included understanding the spread, location, and contribution of first-line managers in HEINEKEN worldwide through examining existing company data and talking to regional and local HR managers.

Some of the early conversations initiated by us identified that within HEINEKEN, some local operating companies already provided development offers for early management. Where this was the case, we undertook a more thorough analysis of current provision to gain a more accurate picture. These subsequent discussions drew attention to three emerging objectives of the new program. First, the First-Line Manager Development Program needed to build a common platform and capability for this critical group within HEINEKEN. Second, it should address some of the early leadership transition difficulties as described in interviews with senior managers and identified in the desk research. Third, the aim should be to work on some of the early leadership issues and challenges identified through the internal employee engagement survey. In summary, a new effective development program would enable more than 6,000 first-line managers to strengthen their teams, and would offer a modular approach with clear opportunities to apply the learning on the job.

It was important to the successful outcome of the project that during this initial contact phase, we approached the local operating companies with an orientation of curiosity. Being able to express a position of genuine interest, rather than one of assessment or audit, led to open conversations about what local sites had found worked well, and what did not, regarding first-line management education. It also meant that a foundation of mutual trust began to grow between us at the Center and our colleagues at the operating sites. At the same time, we were able to identify resources and examples of good practice that could be incorporated into the new First-Line Manager Development Program.

Simultaneously, we started to identify potential HR leaders to actively sponsor the project. Although not initially clear, the role of the Regional HR Directors soon emerged as having a critical part to play. Regularly discussing the project with them, individually and collectively, meant that they were able to help with identifying and promoting opportunities for involvement, and the eventual sign off for the project.

### 2. Commitment through engagement
As the project moved towards the end of the Discovery phase, we made a critical decision—to go out to the local operating companies and engage them in the processes of scoping and designing the development program itself. There were two significant implications of choosing this approach. First, it effectively meant that the team went out to the operating companies without the final solution having been designed. Second, taking time to engage key stakeholders would mean that the final outcome would take longer to produce.

We involved different stakeholder groups so that they could start to influence the outcome. First-line managers, along with representatives of their bosses and subordinates were asked about the leadership challenges being faced, and the kind of development support that might be needed. The local HR teams were closely involved in setting up these engagement sessions. They helped to insure that appropriate preparation and representation took place. We took time out to meet the local HR manager and some of their team to explain the project, and explore how it might fit with the local operating companies.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Guiding Principle</th>
<th>Key Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Discovery</td>
<td>Discovery through curiosity</td>
<td>Building the core team, building active sponsorship, and creating the initial hypothesis or case for change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Engagement</td>
<td>Commitment through engagement</td>
<td>Repeated cycles of involvement of key stakeholder groups in the diagnosis review, planning, design, and piloting of ideas and actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Anchoring</td>
<td>Anchoring through testing</td>
<td>Starting to identify the structures that will be needed to deliver and sustain delivery over time.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Implementation</td>
<td>Implementing through learning</td>
<td>Activating stakeholders to initiate the processes and ideas and support the evaluation of their impact.</td>
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Table 1: SEARCH Approach: Phases, Principles and Activities
company’s priorities. Following the sessions, regional and local HR managers added relevant context to the messages heard and commented on potential options for the future. The Regional HR Directors identified potential locations that were willing to take the risk of early involvement. In the end, over 300 people contributed to the final design.

On reflection, we acknowledged that the approach taken in these first two phases helped to create the foundation for the faster sequence of events in phases three and four. We had managed to create some space for the project by being willing to hold the tension between expectations of fast paced delivery and the desire, of those for whom the program was being developed, to understand and contribute to its creation. Although we faced demands for quick output delivery, we continued to take the time to talk to senior leaders and line managers individually to understand their perspective. Furthermore, we continually made ourselves available to attend existing meetings and Regional summits to explain their progress and manage expectations. Rather than waiting to be invited, we approached important stakeholders pro-actively and asked for time on their meeting agendas to share the progress of the project, and to ask for input. As part of their communication strategy, we sent out regular notes to inform all stakeholders about the achievements and steady forward momentum. Taken together, these actions created a pull from the wider organization which enabled us to walk faster in the coming project phases, when anchoring and implementing the newly designed leadership program.

3. Anchoring through testing
In the third phase project, we ran further engagement sessions, and began to explore the required structures to deliver the final program. We used the relationships built with local sites earlier to test out ideas and identify potential difficulties.

Through conversations and visits with the local operating companies, we had also identified that, although a number of sites already had some development provision, very few had tackled the difficult task of bridging formal, classroom based learning with on-the-job application, in line with HEINEKEN’s Learning Philosophy of 70-20-10 (HEINEKEN, 2012). This approach, introduced by Lombardo and Eichinger (1996), states that for much of work based learning, an employee can expect that 70% will come through the way they learn on the job; 20% will come through feedback, mentoring, and coaching; and 10% is likely to come through more formal classroom based training. In regard to the First-Line Manager Development Program, this philosophy challenged the standard emphasis placed on classroom-based learning, and called for us to expand our thinking to include options that would more overtly make a connection to the participants’ day-to-day role. To cater to this need, we proposed to blend Action Learning (Revans, 1972) with a modular training program—and the idea was well received. As the term Action Learning was widely used in HEINEKEN, with different stakeholders holding different assumptions around the phrase, we decided to change the name of the Action Learning intervention to a new term—Continuous Learning Groups, which would later be referred to as CLGs during the program. This enabled this part of the development offer to be positioned free from any previous experience.

Once the program content modules had been designed, and a structure for Continuous Learning Groups had been developed and agreed, we initiated a series of pilot events. These early workshops provided the chance to test first assumptions and to make relevant adjustments. Experiments made during this phase proved to be helpful in identifying the structures and processes that would later be used to deliver the initiative. In total, seven operating companies ran pilots in four Regions: Africa-Middle East (Nigeria and Egypt), Western Europe (UK and Switzerland), Central and Eastern Europe (Austria and Greece), as well as Americas Region (US).

Rather than waiting to be invited, we approached important stakeholders pro-actively and asked for time on their meeting agendas to share the progress of the project, and to ask for input. As part of their communication strategy, we sent out regular notes to inform all stakeholders about the achievements and steady forward momentum. Taken together, these actions created a pull from the wider organization which enabled us to walk faster in the coming project phases, when anchoring and implementing the newly designed leadership program.

4. Implementing through learning
The early pilot events proved to be successful. Survey interviews carried out with local HR, attendees, and their managers indicated a positive impact of the new program. As implementation plans were developed, stakeholders who had been part of the process throughout were able to contribute their learning and shape the forward agenda. Sample interviews were carried out with early attendees and key reflections were shared throughout the growing network. This enabled a continuous flow of feedback and follow through with participants, in order to improve and sustain the program. In addition, by inviting participation of local HR managers to help shape the program, potential concerns were addressed early on and mechanisms to support easier local implementation were built in.

This process helped us to define relevant key First-Line Manager Development Program deployment principles that could be passed on to local operating companies looking to participate in the future. This, combined with what they were hearing from the pilot sites, helped to build confidence in the development
program. Support thus came from the sites through the local HR Managers to the Regional HR Directors, to help gain HR Leadership Team approval for wider implementation.

Results and Business Impact

The First-Line Manager Development Framework

The project resulted in a global first-line manager development framework, including a bank of 19 content modules and an action learning process enabling on-the-job application (Figure 2). The content modules were grouped under four main themes: the Kick-Off Session; the Survival Kit; Team Performance and Effectiveness; and Stepping Up to Lead. These four themes were organized to be either deployed as four two-day workshops, or split up and run as a series of shorter sessions. Each of the 19 modules was supported by a set of resources including:

- Trainer session notes—on how to run the session
- Trainer information sheet—practical information regarding the session
- Presentation slides
- Participant workbook—for reflection and activities throughout the module
- Post-session evaluation sheet—for assessment by the FLMs on relevance of content, feedback to venue and trainers
- Additionally, some modules contained assigned pre-work which participants receive in advance.

The inclusion of Action Learning, under the name of Continuous Learning Groups, has enhanced learning application. Participants were divided into sets of six individuals and provided with a trained and certified HEINEKEN coach to help them with their learning process. The Continuous Learning Groups met regularly between the formal workshops, to discuss the application of their learning and any associated challenges they were facing as a first-line manager. Thus, this approach was consistent with 20% of HEINEKEN’s learning philosophy, to learn and develop through the relationships with others. At the same time it supported the 70% of learning through experiences, as the process helped to reflect on new situations and behavior on the job (HEINEKEN, 2012). The first-line manager development framework is presented in Figure 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 2: HEINEKEN’s First-Line Manager Development Framework</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>KICK-OFF</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. FLM-DP Introduction</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Overview of the program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Understanding learning styles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Explanation of the CLG process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• FLM Handbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Setting up a learning contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pre-work for the Survival Kit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTRODUCTORY SESSION</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. The FLM Survival Kit</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| • Keeping one’s head above water in the new role – dealing successfully with the daily challenges of being a FLM
  • Role of FLM
  • Gaining Self-Awareness
  • Motivation
  • Stress Management
  • Meeting Skills
  • Key People Processes
  • Decision Making
  • Delegation
  • Time Management
| **SESSION 2.1 & 2.2**                                         |
| **3. Team Performance & Effectiveness**                        |
| • Tools and processes to deliver performance through the team
  • Teamwork
  • Influence and Persuasion
  • Understanding the Differences between Self and Others
  • Problem Solving
  • Conflict Management
  • Performance Management
| **SESSION 3.1 & 3.2**                                         |
| **4. Stepping up to Lead**                                    |
| • Creating foundations for the future
  • Heineken for Leaders – The Business Perspective
  • Communicating for Impact & Engagement
  • Coaching
  • Understanding my Leadership Style and its Effect on Others |
| **SESSION 4.1**                                               |

Continuous Learning Group (CLG) Process

- An integral component of the approach to FLM development
- Translates workshop content into application and daily practice
- CLGs meet on a regular basis to share experiences and plan actions
- Meetings can be face to face or virtual
- A certified coach is essential for the effectiveness of the process
**Deployment Principles**

Supplementing the development framework, we proposed six common deployment principles to be applied to all participating local operating companies, which were approved by the HEINEKEN HR Leadership Team (HEINEKEN, 2011). The principles were derived from the conversations and experiences gained through the four phases of the SEARCH process. The goals of these principles were to ensure strong local ownership, and promote at the same time consistency and quality of the program. The principles and the supporting experiences are listed in Table 2.

By the end of 2011, more than 30 local operating companies from all Regions had signed up for deployment. Due to the diverse nature of these businesses, the program has been arranged in a way that local management can either use the modules as provided, or choose certain elements to supplement what they already have.

**Quantitative and Qualitative Evaluation**

In order to test the relevance of the First-Line Manager Deployment Principles, we linked quantitative and qualitative evaluation scores, as well as experiences from local operating companies, to the principles, which are described in Table 2.

The first deployment principle addressed Local Delivery. Experiences showed that all local operations initiated and owned local delivery. In some cases, trainers from one site were used for the trainings at another location. For example, the trainers from Nigeria also facilitated the workshops in Sierra Leone. Where materials had to be translated to local languages countries shared costs and efforts. Examples included cooperation between Austria and Switzerland for translation into German, or between Algeria and Congo for documents in French.

The second principle addressed Common Framework with flexible modular approach. Experiences from the pilots showed that five out of the seven pilots used the framework as suggested, while two countries (i.e., HEINEKEN UK and HEINEKEN USA) blended existing local programs with the first-line manager program. After each workshop, evaluation sheets were distributed, containing 20 questions for the Survival Kit workshop, 25 questions for the Team Performance and Effectiveness, and 24 questions for the Stepping up to lead workshop. The numbers of items varied as some questions were addressed in all evaluation questionnaires (e.g., The balance between theory and practice was right), while specific topics covered during the different workshops were addressed in the respective questionnaire (e.g., for Team Performance and Effectiveness: I know the stages of team development to develop high performance teamwork). A six point likert scale was used, ranging from 1 (not at all) to 6 (completely). Quantitative evaluation scores of the workshop in the five pilot countries using the overall framework reflected an average score of five, showing that the overall satisfaction with the quality of the workshop was high.

The third principle referred to HEINEKEN’s 70-20-10 Learning Philosophy and the application of core content plus continuous learning groups for practical application of the workshop content. During the pilot phase, qualitative evaluations were conducted in addition to post workshop evaluations. Therefore, randomly selected first-line managers, line managers, coaches who facilitated the continuous learning process as well as all involved HR managers received specific questionnaires per target audience, with a total of twelve open questions (sample question: What can you see the FLM do differently after the FLM-DP program). In total, 35 respondents participated in the survey. Overall, responses showed that the program was perceived to be highly beneficial for the identified target audience (HEINEKEN, 2011). Behavioral changes were observed by the program participants themselves as well as by their managers and local HR. Core themes highlighted that the development program instilled openness and confidence, as shown in a quote from a first-line manager in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Experience from four phases of SEARCH process</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| 1. Local Delivery | » Ownership by the local sites is critical to the success of the program.  
» Where extra effort has been made by the local HR team, the benefit is seen in terms of clarity of expectations, pre-work completion, and engagement of attendees, |
| 2. Common Framework with flexible modular approach | » The first-line managers appreciate that they can draw on similar development wherever they are in HEINEKEN.  
» Requires the local training team to adjust the content covered and the pace of delivery to suit the local group composition and need. |
| 3. 70-20-10 Learning Philosophy: Core Content + CLG | » Delegates quickly pick up that this program is different—more of a development journey.  
» They appreciate the mix of elements: inputs, activities, reflection and continuous learning groups.  
» Continuous Learning Group process has been very well received and seen to be a positive and innovative addition to the classroom training. |
| 4. Efficiency and Sustainability | » Local operating companies integrate existing programs into the development framework over time. |
| 5. Consistent High Quality | » Bank of resources developed with flexibility of application in mind.  
» Local sites source trainers from locally known and trusted providers they have worked with.  
» Learning coaches take on the role only after having been through global training and certification process. |
| 6. Regional Prioritization | » Regions decide on nomination criteria and roll-out plans together with their respective operating companies. |
HEINEKEN’s future success: this program was critical and relevant for HR professionals was their recognition that its continuation. “Another aspect raised by pants’ enthusiasm about the program and “What I enjoyed the most was the participation in the program. Main themes highlight that the program supports first-line managers in becoming more confident within their role as manager, for example, by applying coaching skills:

There are some examples which I see the first-line manager doing differently, e.g., when talking to team members he asks for their input rather than dictating them.

—Supervisor from Switzerland

The fourth deployment principle concerned the Efficiency and Sustainability of the program. Qualitative responses from local HR professionals highlighted the positive reaction of the first-line managers and recognized the sustainability of the program. An HR manager from Greece described this phenomenon with the following words: “What I enjoyed the most was the participants’ enthusiasm about the program and its continuation.” Another aspect raised by HR professionals was their recognition that this program was critical and relevant for HEINEKEN’s future success:

It is seen as a big benefit, that there is now a program like the First-Line Manager Development Program. It is tailor-made for first-line managers. The content is exactly what we come across in everyday activities.

—HR Manager, Austria

Despite the changing economic climate, HEINEKEN has continued to invest in leadership development programs.

—HR Manager Greece

In addition to up-skilling the first-line managers, the global certification of coaches to facilitate the continuous learning groups increased the overall coaching capability in the organization. A coach from the Americas region reported on her personal benefits: [The coaching certification] “has helped my development regarding facilitation, listening, feedback, and coaching skills.”

The fifth deployment principle addressed the Consistent high quality of the program. Quantitative evaluation scores of the workshops were globally collated beyond the pilot groups. By mid 2012, a total of twelve cohorts had globally provided their workshop evaluation scores. The overall score remained to be five out of the six-point likert scale, indicating a high satisfaction with the program.

Finally, the sixth principle referred to Regional Prioritization, indicating that Regions would decide on the roll-out plans with the respective local operations. By mid 2012, 35 HEINEKEN subsidiaries had started the deployment of the program, a sign that more than 550 first-line managers received the first-line manager training.

Reflections from the Change Agents

From an OD perspective, the first-line manager project was perceived as an example of best practice between global, regional, and local HR. The modular design and locally based deployment has contributed to the program’s sustainability. While it is aimed at first-line managers, the program has also benefited the wider HR community. The delivery of in-house coaching workshops, as part of the program design, was seen as developing critical HR skills that could be used in situations beyond the program. Furthermore, HEINEKEN’s HR community has developed a network that has helped to promote sharing of ideas between different sites. Since its wider deployment, the most common feedback of those involved described and valued the First-Line Manager Development Program as a well-thought-through initiative.

Beyond the organization benefit, we found that the project had enabled us to test some of our assumptions about change, as well as adopting some new ones. Key to our learning journey were the following principles:

» Whole systems thinking: We took the view that the development needs of the first-line managers were best addressed in the context of the whole system. In general, the role of a first-line manager, the way they act, and the opportunities presented to them, occur in relationship to a series of other people and processes. By taking a whole system perspective, we sought to engage multiple layers of management and leadership. When site engagement sessions took place, senior business leaders, local HR managers, first-line managers, and individual contributors all knew about the initiative.

» Talk to the people who ultimately will be using what you are trying to develop: Although it took time, identifying key stakeholders—and then seeking out their thoughts and ideas—turned out to be an important step in the overall process. The first-line managers, as well as their line managers, needed to understand the program if potential attendees were to have time to focus on learning. Those who were going to deliver the classroom training needed to understand the approach and design—for some locations this was quite different from existing practice. The local HR Manager understanding of the project was critical to ensure that the right people were attending, and so on.

» No one person holds the whole answer: Although both of us had experience of leadership development, we found that the final solution was different to what we might have identified at the start of the process. The act of conversation with multiple stakeholders had shaped our thinking in a way that we could not have predicted.

» Engagement is key: Throughout the SEARCH process, we sought to widen engagement at each step. Once a part of the system had been touched, we kept contact with those who had contributed, so that people knew that their contribution had been recognized. Over time, this helped to shift the stance in the local operating companies...
from one of cautious interest to one of commitment.

» Relationships count: The scale and approach of the project would not have been possible with a team of only two. Critical to the success of the initiative were the relationships that we built up across the organization. We helped to create a network of relationships that had not existed and gave it a purpose. With the right encouragement and support, this web of connections existed as a structure to energize and support further organization development.

» The power of reflection: At the start of the project, both of us were working part-time on this initiative. Although this added to the pressure on pace, we found that the pattern of dis-engagement and re-engagement forced us to build in regular catch up sessions. These were used to review progress and contribute additional perspectives. Both of us commented after the project on the value gained by pausing and reflecting on a regular basis.

To conclude, the applied SEARCH approach was a successful method to create an innovative and yet sustainable development program for first-line managers in HEINEKEN. By walking slowly through the two initial phases of Discovery and Engagement, we created the relationship and trust needed to create the space to build a sustainable development intervention. These early stages seemed long for some stakeholders. However, they created a pull from the business for the leadership program. This pull accelerated the success of the two subsequent phases—Anchoring and Implementation. In the summer of 2012, the project was awarded the international HEINEKEN HR Star Award, in recognition for outstanding accomplishments, and as an example of best practice in creating a sustainable development offer for first-line managers.

Sources


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How OD Principles of Change Still Matter in an Impossible Situation

By Carrie Birmingham

Background

The name, News International (NI) generates a reaction in everyone I meet. As an employee of this news worthy business I am instantly judged; yet there is much more to this business than meets the eye. In the past 18 months there has been much written about the previously unknown company including coverage of allegations of phone hacking, the resignation of a visible CEO, and arrests of employees past and present.

As a media corporation, with a recognizable figurehead, there is a strong paternalistic culture. Added to this as a publisher of daily newspapers there are some inbuilt tensions that defy many best practice models:
1. Producing two newspapers everyday with thousands of stories drives a focus on the next 24 hours alongside a need to invest in the future as readers move to digital media consumption.
2. Editorial integrity defended vigorously jostling with the commercial requirement to build partnerships with corporations to generate advertising revenue.
3. Hierarchal decision making alongside a network culture where relationships are key.
4. Collaboration across multiple disciplines, and internal competition to get exclusives for your brand over another (even if it is within the same company).
5. A mature business facing the reality that its primary format for producing its product (newsprint) is in decline.

All this forms the backdrop for two major challenges the company faced in 2011: to weather public scrutiny whilst simultaneously responding to a need to substantially reduce costs. Whilst these challenges were felt across the business it is the Commercial function I will focus on.

The Client

The Commercial function generates advertising revenue and is a major contributor to the bottom line of the company. In 2008, the 350 strong team had been guided through a process by a large consultancy firm that saw hard interventions like restructuring implemented with efficiency but without engagement. There was a sharp focus on the cost and revenue lines that were needed for the next year, with little focus on culture or behavior. The human (and intangible) cost of this meant the need for sustained investment in the culture after restructuring to enable recovery. Much like a body recovering from an operation, healing was necessary and meaning needed to be re-established. A highly inclusive vision and values project saw people define the company they wanted to be part of, and a peer coaching scheme developed skills that allowed people to feel supported. With these changes came the possibility of creating change with people rather than doing it to them. This foundation was crucial when the challenges of 2011 surfaced and it became clear that without transformation, Commercial was facing a gradual decline of revenues,
whilst simultaneously facing increased complexity and hence rising costs of generating business. The challenge we had to answer was whether we could deliver change with people and culture built into what we did, rather than something to be fixed afterwards. With a backdrop of external criticism that was damaging staff morale and our employee brand, a focus on the health of the commercial function and its people, enabled us to forge ahead.

The OD Practices and Principles that Informed Our Work with Commercial

There are many text books and wise experts who will describe OD for you, some of whom I have paid homage to in the references. For clarity we chose to use the model in Figure 1.

In our work, the HR team has created a partnership with the Commercial team that many described as a helping relationship. It is my belief that this is a HR person’s start point despite its positioning in the model. Without this relationship, the wisest suggestion will be go unheard. Our diagnostic activities focused on business measures (average transaction value, share of the market, and overall revenue), customer service measures (client and agency survey positioning, and raw scores) and internal measures (core value pulse survey, employee opinion survey, and 360 feedback). These measures informed our understanding of our position and what would work. But I was struck by how little I had actually seen OD in action. This article is intended to describe in more pragmatic terms the interventions and what they look, sound, and feel like for the HR Director, Change team, Leadership team, and the people involved. The way we approach this change together honors:

» Giving the people involved the chance to co-create the future
» Building communities of actions and loosen the need to control
» Distributive leadership
» Providing multiple forums for communication
» Ensuring you balance loss and opportunity for the people involved

An Integrated and Multi-System OD Intervention

To respond to these diagnostics and the environment, in 2011 we implemented a number of OD interventions to begin a 4 year transformational change journey. Learning from previous lessons, the interventions focused on both the what and the how: what we needed to do and how the interventions could demonstrate our approach to this change.

By starting with the appointment of a dedicated Transformation Director, we signaled how seriously we were taking this. This was significant because in the past we had often asked someone to take responsibility for change in addition to their day job or used external help. By appointing one of our own Directors reporting to the Managing Director, we were ensuring it was NI board led and we were responsible for delivery. Whilst many businesses use external consultants to lead this type of work, we consciously positioned the consultants we used in a support rather than a lead role.

During the scoping, we offered change engagement training to our managers that considered how change feels and provided them with tools to help themselves and their team to cope. In the past we had spent little time acknowledging human aspects or equipping managers to deal with them. This was treated with skepticism at first, but once people attended the workshop they complimented the intent and content. The focus of the workshop was understanding change and then using coaching skills to work with people’s responses to it. Unlike many activities at this time it was relatively free of content about what we were doing.

Large Group Events to Articulate the Change Effort

To set the context, we hosted a World Café with 20% of our workforce including tops, middles, and bottoms (Oshry, 2008) to articulate the need for change and to surface the thorny issues we had to tackle. We then used this group to create work streams to work on the big questions we faced. They conducted action research (Reason & Bradbury, 2001) to further articulate the context, interrogate the problems faced, and make recommendations on what we should do. This was significant because it signaled that we would get people other than the leadership team involved and we would not shy away from tackling the real issues. We were amazed by the quantity and quality of work these groups created, and many of their recommendations formed the backbone of the project plans subsequently created.

We created a website and uploaded documents that showed what we were doing and why. We branded our change initiative with a project name, logo, and physical manifestation of this brand, which allowed people to identify with the change. Through this website we have made materials about the change available to everyone to ensure those not directly included in work streams could see what was being explored rather than filling in gaps themselves. We have made the need to reduce costs clear and transparent in written and verbal communications rather than be silent on this. Numerous people (including ourselves at times) have questioned the risk involved in this and “worrying people unnecessarily.” But we felt it was crucial that we treated our people with honesty, trust and transparency (Axelrod, 2010) because we knew they would not believe us if we protected them by saying there were not going to be any redundancies. In fact we made our intention to explore...
outsourcing explicit, which created anxiety, and later in the project we ruled it out as an idea.

At the point that we needed to change the structure, redundancies for some became a reality. Obviously fear about the project was heightened at this point, and to ensure we maintained transparency we conducted an open recruitment process, giving full visibility to all of the new roles, allowing anyone to apply. We used an application form based on appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2009), interviewed everyone who applied and gave everyone face to face feedback. Whilst this created a great deal of work for the leadership team and still created anxiety, people were still being given autonomy (Rock, 2008). In reality we lost some people (redundancies and resignations) we would have liked to keep. But we entered this process knowing that this was a risk and these people simply did not have the skills that matched our needs or chose not to be part of our future and so self-selected.

Early Signs of What Works

We have adjusted our six monthly pulse survey to understand how people feel about working at NI and in February 2012 there was a mix of emotions (see Figure 2).

It was interesting to see such a mix of positive and negative emotions, and having reviewed the full results with our core team, we have created a specific workstream focused on communications because the pulse survey showed us that we needed to understand what our people were confused about. This work has to be done with people from across the business not just the project or HR team.

Given our inbuilt tensions, the project has been continually under pressure from above to deliver change now (without all aspects of the infrastructure e.g., technology) and deliver change in the future. Whilst we have sometimes struggled with this, it has actually been very important to our staff who tell us that they want to better

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of intervention</th>
<th>Intention of Intervention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appointment of a dedicated Transformation Director</td>
<td>• Signal significance of change and position it as NI lead. Create dedicated resource to lead and drive initiative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change engagement training to our managers</td>
<td>• Provide managers with tools to cope with change for themselves and with their teams.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Café</td>
<td>• Outline context for industry and NI position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Articulate the big questions this raises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Signal the involvement of our people by launching work-streams to answer the big questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a brand and use website to upload documents</td>
<td>• Give something for people to identify with.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Treat people with honesty, trust, and transparency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change the structure</td>
<td>• Balance the need to change roles (which meant loss) with new opportunities for exiting employees.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1

Answered by the following question shown as a Wordle:

“In no particular order, which three words best describe how you feel working at NI at the moment?”

Figure 2: Feb 2012 Pulse check

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It is hard to show what our OD intervention has achieved in times like this and when we are still early in the delivery phase. But the real question is what would have happened to our people, to their productivity, and to the organizational output if we were not using the OD principles in change to keep the engagement of our people going?

Reflection and Lessons Learned

When you are initiating change it is so easy to get frustrated when you are trying to focus on both what and how but you continue to hear feedback from people that they are confused, scared, or ambivalent. It is tempting to resort to faster ways of doing things because doing things with people in mind is slower and tiring because you have to face up to the fact that not everyone is enjoying it. It takes a great deal of energy to keep communicating when people say they want to be communicated to but then do not take the opportunities created for a conversation. It also demands a great deal of trust between the HR Director (and dedicated Transformation Director) and the Leadership team that is built up over time leading up to a change.

Most project efforts and plans are focused on controlling what is happening, when and how. But change is an organic process; there are many things that you cannot control. As an example good people will leave, irrespective of how well you pay, promote, or support them. Therefore surface this risk early on, accept it, and do not take it personally.

There is a long way to go on this journey and we have still much to learn about changing an organization that has inbuilt tensions and is so much in the public eye. But the people I meet in News International every day tell me it is worth the effort to identify how we do this with them rather than to them.

References


Carrie Birmingham is an HR Director for News International and has significant experience working with teams within an organization in crisis. As a management development and OD specialist (completed MSC at Roffey Park) her approach to HR is focused on long term sustainable change. Birmingham has a passion for enhancing the engagement of people within business and a proven track record of delivering. She can be reached at carriebirmingham@hotmail.com.

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The Future Role of OD

From the CEO’s Perspective

By Andrea Adams

When you ask CEOs what keeps them awake at night, they will typically mention two things: concerns about how to get their organization to deliver against expectations in the short term, and how to develop the organization so that it is fit for the future.

These two challenges have remained unchanged over time. However, what has changed—quite dramatically, in the past five years—is the world in which CEOs operate. Globalization, the pace and scale of technological developments, demands for greater transparency of leadership, closer communication with customers and stakeholders—all of these factors are influencing the way successful organizations operate.

Business leaders need to identify, prioritize, and capitalize on these contextual changes in order to sustain their businesses. They need new approaches to tackle today’s challenges—and many of these approaches are to be found in OD.

OD occurs at all levels of an organization. However, given the scale and complexity of the challenges facing today’s organizations, the natural place for the leadership of system-wide organizational change is the CEO. OD practitioners have the potential to make a significant impact on organizational performance.

To do so, though, requires access to the C Suite—a notoriously closed shop—and the ability to demonstrate how OD can make a positive impact on short- and long-term business performance.

The CEO’s Increasing Need for OD Expertise

Recent research undertaken by The Mullwood Partnership in collaboration with Dr. Sukanya Sen Gupta, Associate Professor of Warwick Business School, and CriticalEye (Network of Leaders), offers insight into the increasing need for OD expertise among CEOs.

The research identifies the career experience and attributes required for future CEOs, with data from three questions particularly relevant:
1. What has changed/is different about the CEO role today than five years ago?
2. What are the leadership challenges that today’s CEOs need to meet?
3. What is the one factor that makes a CEO successful—which areas most influence CEO success?

Responses to these questions provide OD practitioners with insight into where interventions may create the most value for the business leaders with whom they work.

1 International board level executive and non-executive search services and industry leading research. Jo Sellwood-Taylor one of the Founding Directors of the Mullwood Partnership is also a Non Executive Director at Triumpha, (the author’s consulting firm) and has released the initial findings from the research for inclusion in this article.
2 Research was conducted via face-to-face, video, and teleconference interviews with 126 academic leaders; aspiring and incumbent global and group HR directors; chairmen, CEOs, COOs, and MDs from both HR and non-HR functional backgrounds. It has also recently been extended to include headhunters and executive search partners.
3 Separate publication(s) are available that describe the wider findings. If you would like a copy please email andrea.adams@triumpha.co.uk.
So what has changed in the past five years? Responses to this question are shown in Table 1.

Four clear themes emerged about the CEO role itself, the impact of the environmental context, standards for creative people leadership, and the critical external relationships on which a CEO must focus.

Stakeholders—including customers and employees—have higher expectations of CEOs, yet market conditions have become increasingly complex and unpredictable. Public scrutiny has increased, with corporate leaders expected to demonstrate strong personal and professional values.

CEOs today must be flexible and agile enough to seize opportunities, and need organizations that are primed to embrace innovation and creativity.

There is greater demand for versatility in leadership, with CEOs called upon to be equally able at setting organizational vision and strategy and at developing and coaching individuals.

Interestingly, 60% of respondents said none of these leadership challenges was new. Instead, today’s “stretch” results from the amplification of existing leadership challenges, which are outlined in Table 2.

Table 1: What has Changed for CEOs in the Past 5 Years?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role:</th>
<th>Environment:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Greater transparency.</td>
<td>• Accelerated pace of change and expectation of fast results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Need to deliver constant/transformational change, while also</td>
<td>• Faster, more dynamic communication methods (social media) and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ensuring stability and providing direction in unpredictable</td>
<td>technological developments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>market conditions.</td>
<td>• Pressure from stakeholders to outperform the market and focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Shorter average tenure, less patience among stakeholders for</td>
<td>on how results are delivered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>results.</td>
<td>• Competitive edge reliant on agility, creativity, and innovation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Higher customer expectations, greater need for detailed market</td>
<td>Constant economic uncertainty demands multiple strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reputational risks and correlation between personal reputation and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>corporate requires greater personal resilience.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• More leadership versatility, able to think at big picture and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>operational levels.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creative People Leadership</th>
<th>External Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Genuine integrity and</td>
<td>• Managing a range of stakeholders,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consistency of leadership.</td>
<td>from investors to media to regulators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Connection with people</td>
<td>• Increased amount of personal time dedicated to external</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at all levels of an</td>
<td>issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organization.</td>
<td>• Public scrutiny at a personal level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Talent attraction and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>development.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to inspire and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mobilize the whole</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organization.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Creation of exceptional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>senior team,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>using a coaching mindset.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Today’s Leadership Challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engaging employees</th>
<th>• Engaging people locally and globally.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Building diverse talent and leadership capability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Creating a real sense of belonging for employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Enabling diverse and innovative thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Managing the complexity of different generations and cultures within one organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating with customers</td>
<td>• Re-inventing customer relations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Gaining continual insights through a variety of channels: understanding what customers are thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Being open minded and inventive in customer engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing stakeholders</td>
<td>• Ensuring transparency and visibility among all shareholders and stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing future vision</td>
<td>• Holding people’s attention and loyalty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Creating context and meaning for the short and long term in a volatile marketplace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Providing clarity, enabling courage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing complexity and uncertainty</td>
<td>• Adapting to an environment of rapid change created by globalization and technology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding and setting strategic course</td>
<td>• Knowing how to drive, change, and lead the business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Managing consistency and spotting opportunities for growth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating</td>
<td>• Handling the immediacy of social media, media, and being transparent and accessible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing risks</td>
<td>• Dealing with high levels of personal risk and visibility, while being an engaging leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring diversity</td>
<td>• In its broadest form, beyond the business plan and beyond gender and thought diversity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining personal health</td>
<td>• Both physically and mentally.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These are changing the proportion of time CEOs spend on different challenges, in the approaches they deploy and the acceleration of delivery timescales, influenced by typically shorter CEO tenures.

**What is the One Factor that makes a CEO Successful?**

Each of the top seven factors identified by the Mullwood respondents is one where OD makes a transformational difference:

1. **People Leadership**
2. **Vision**
3. **Drive/Passion/Energy**
4. **Business Insight/Understanding**
5. **Articulate/Communication Skills**
6. **Team Building/Delegation**
7. **Strategy**

A CEO is expected to develop a vision, strategy, and financial goals for the business, but it is strong people leadership that is the differentiator.

The following quote from Jonathan Chapman, Audit Director Planning, Resources & Risk at AVIVA, effectively illustrates this point. Today’s CEOs must be able

“...to take people with you on a journey. You can have the best strategy in the world, but if people don’t want to follow you then you won’t be successful. Ironically, you are almost better having a mediocre strategy that is well implemented, than a brilliant strategy that is poorly implemented. Succeeding comes from getting people behind the direction [you’ve set]. That is about building your executive team around you to really... pull it forward, and having that spirit and drive cascade down through the organization.”

Turning from the specific challenges of the CEO role to the macro challenges for today’s organizations, OD is again a central requirement.

As Gary Hamel (2007) argues in *The Future of Management*, for organizations to be fit for the future they need to be fit for human beings. He identifies the biggest challenges facing organizations today as:

- **Accelerated change**: Building a company that can change as fast as change itself.
- **Hyper-competition**: Building a company where innovation is the work of everybody, everyday.
- **Creating new knowledge**: Building a company where people are willing to bring the gifts of their initiative, creativity & passion.

There is a need to design and develop organizations that are more adaptable, innovative, collaborative, inspiring, and ultimately accountable. This calls for a different approach, one where collaborative multi-disciplinary communities produce interventions fit for the times—and it is a challenge to many deeply held beliefs and practices.

Today’s organizations operate in a profoundly different world to the one that existed when many of the prevailing management models and approaches were developed.

There is a need to design and develop organizations that are more adaptable, innovative, collaborative, inspiring, and ultimately accountable. This calls for a different approach, one where collaborative multi-disciplinary communities produce interventions fit for the times—and it is a challenge to many deeply held beliefs and practices. Quite simply, we have run out of road with the existing management model and we need to do things differently.

OD offers approaches that resonate with today’s business challenges. This presents immense opportunities for making a positive difference at scale to the success of the organizations that make up the fabric of our society.

It is undoubtedly an exciting time to be in the field of OD. However, if we want to capture this opportunity, we need to access the C Suite and adapt our value proposition to ensure it is understood and relevant at board level.

**Gaining Access to the C Suite**

This means gaining entry to a group of exceptionally busy executives, who are often only inclined to meet with people they regard as their peers or who are experts/thought leaders in areas of interest to them.

Assuming this pre-established credibility, the ability to hold a business conversation focused on outcomes is then essential. This needs to be backed up with the capacity to offer a clear articulation of the direction the CEO and their organiza-
It is therefore important to develop strong connections by sharing material and keeping your contacts up to date with the work you do, plus new approaches and expertise. It is also valuable to play to your strengths and partner with colleagues within and outside of the OD field who already have experience of working at C Suite level. Find people who complement and augment what you bring.

I was once asked to facilitate a half-day conversation on strengths-based leadership with seven CEOs I had not met, but was recommended by a colleague who knew I had experience in this area. This helped me build an expanding network of C Suite contacts.

In the years that have followed, I have kept in regular contact with these CEOs, coaching one intensively and supporting all by helping them with strategic direction-setting, change leadership, and collaborative working across their seven organizations. They have introduced me to other CEOs looking for strategic support.

There is also a need to ensure you are speaking the same language as the C Suite—in other words, changing the conversation from OD concerns to business issues. Demonstrating a knowledge of the market challenges and the organizational context builds essential credibility and ensures OD actions are clearly aligned with C Suite goals.

Data supporting the link between OD and organizational success will be important in gaining the confidence of senior executives. It is vital to demonstrate in practical terms, for example, how OD helps CEOs balance short-term performance objectives with longer-term resilience, or, as Colin Price and Scott Keller (2011) describe it, organizational health. Price and Keller’s research makes it clear that CEOs need more help in defining their longer-term “health” agenda and we can assume that striking a balance between performance and health is not the norm.

So being able to point to respected research is valuable. McKinsey’s 2010 survey of companies undergoing transformations reveals that organizations that focused on performance and health simultaneously were nearly twice as successful as those that focused on health alone and nearly three times as successful as those that focused on performance alone.

OD practitioners working at senior executive level need to be able to partner with the organization on its journey, being responsive and addressing issues conversation by conversation. For example, Triumpha was asked to facilitate a board strategy session to define the purpose, vision, and strategic priorities of a newly independent organization—a seemingly straightforward brief.

However, before the session, the Chair raised questions about whether the incumbent CEO had the experience and capabilities to lead the next phase of organizational development. This resulted in the organization of a second board-level conversation to help the board define the success criteria and CEO role profile they needed. Ultimately, the board decided to appoint a new CEO. Triumpha then developed the underpinning leadership behavioral model and joined the selection panel to conduct a behavioral interview, and coach the new CEO once appointed. It was able quickly to respond to the board’s changing requirements.

Specific situations and problems require unique solutions. Increased demand for OD means we can expect an influx of new entrants into the OD space. This increased competition demands a strategic response. According to Michael Porter, Professor at Harvard Business School, strategy explains how an organization faced with competition will achieve superior performance.

If we want to stay in the mix and play a significant role at this pivotal time we need to take a hard look at our competitive environment. Our value proposition must be in tune with, perhaps even ahead of, the marketplace we serve.

In the context of OD support, if we compete to be the best, we risk competing by imitation—ultimately delivering “vanilla” offerings that are out of step with today’s challenges. Competing to be unique, however, ensures we meet the diverse needs the new business context demands.

Creating and leading organizations that are adaptable, innovative, collaborative, inspiring, and accountable used to be the concern of the few. It is now the concern of the many. OD finds itself occupying an unfamiliar position at the top of the organizational agenda.

The work from the Mullwood partnership, McKinsey, and Gary Hamel provides a strong directional indicator of OD’s importance as a board-level practice. Its practitioners have the potential to make a significant contribution at this pivotal time.

Seizing the full breadth of this opportunity requires access to and credibility in the C Suite. It also requires strategic thinking about how to stay relevant, delivering interventions fit for today’s times. OD offers practitioners, working with the C Suite, a real opportunity to infuse organizations with innovation.

It’s possible collectively to make a significant, positive impact on organizational performance -- and the working lives of the people who create success.

Reference


Introduction

John and Joyce Weir’s mantra that, “Everybody is doing the best they can with what they have, every minute of every day,” is at once profound and reassuring. On another level, it encapsulates what we observed about the UK and European OD field by looking at it through the eyes of some UK based practitioners.

Between May 29 and July 6, 2012, we conducted interviews and an online survey of UK OD practitioners asking them: What features have shaped the OD field in the UK and what are some of its dominant characteristics? What are the educational and employment backgrounds of OD practitioners, their motivations and values as these are reflected in their practice? How do they connect with each other and expand their knowledge and practice? Is the state of the UK and European OD field thriving or waning? What new trends and shifts may be observed and what is their impact? What needs to be done to continue to develop OD in the UK?

Our intention was to maximise the number and range of survey respondents by circulating the link to the survey through a range of networks and connections including:

» NTL (UK) graduates
» Professional and personal networks in banking and local government / public sector
» Professional and social media tool, LinkedIn, which hosts a number of OD practitioner online networks.

The majority of the 77 actual respondents were the authors’ fellow NTL graduates, however, making this a highly biased sample. Clearly, the observations generated in the data ought not to be applied to UK / Europe at large. However, even within this limited exercise, interesting themes, and ideas have emerged which merit attention and further exploration.

What the Data Reveals about Practitioners

Where Practitioners are Employed

Figure 1 shows the breakdown of the types of organizations in which respondents were based.

Their Routes into OD

Interviewees’ were asked about their routes into OD and the extent to which working...
in OD was a planned and deliberate choice. There were not clearly defined paths into OD for most UK-raised-and-educated respondents. Several interviewees said that in retrospect they had been “doing OD” long before they realized that it could be described that way. Subsequently finding their way to some form of OD theory or learning was like coming home: a validation of what they had felt was right, instinctively: “I did not always have the words OD but I’ve been doing it all my life. It was inherent” (Interviewee 3).

Others made the connection between their instinctive approach and values and OD theory / professional practice after they connected with an established practitioner or one of the few UK institutions related to OD.

Roffey Park, part consultancy and part research establishment, featured in the educational, consulting, and academic backgrounds of many interviewees. One described it as, “distinct from consultancies because first of all it is ‘a place’ and it does research. It is on the cusp between academia and practice” (Interviewee 4).

The Tavistock Institute, established at the same time as NTL in the US, was also cited by many practitioners as highly influential in shaping their values and consultancy practice.

Their Education and Qualifications
Of the survey respondents, 65% agreed that they had formal OD qualifications. Most of these (52) held an NTL Certificate, reflecting the nature of the survey sample. Only 11 cited another OD qualification including, for example, Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), Change Agent training (Surrey University), Masters in People, MBA, and Post Grad diploma in HRM. Several interviewees pointed to the variety of routes taken from practice to academia and vice versa.

Related academic qualifications were held by 69% of respondents and included degrees in Human Resources Management, Psychology, Business Administration, Sociology, and academic coaching qualifications.

Although the range of available academic programs in OD and consulting has increased in recent years (more of this later), few survey respondents cited these. Outside of the active and influential consulting / research organizations such as Roffey Park, Ashridge Business School, The Tavistock Institute, Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) and their programs, OD education has largely been limited to MBA modules at University Business Schools. The establishment of the NTL Certificate Program in the UK (currently working with its 6th cohort) has undoubtedly impacted on the degree of theoretical and experiential OD education available to UK practitioners. This was the intention of Mee-Yan Cheung-Judge: “I brought the NTL OD certificate program over because I wanted to provide quality OD education to practitioners. Similarly I got on the OD Network board so that I could bring more of the reflective practice over to the UK.”

The survey asked about any complementary study undertaken. Of the 171 responses from 68 people: 85% had studied coaching, 35% NeuroLinguistic Programming, 28% Lean /Kaizen, 27% therapy or counselling, and 54% CIPD. In the open ended response box, 15 people mentioned other study including dialogic intervention, use of MBTI, Action Learning facilitation, use of Insights, hypnotherapy, and Theory U.

Their Values and Motivation
Interviewees were also asked about the values underpinning their practice and how those values had been forged or had surfaced in their lives. Those with the greatest experience in the field were most likely to identify a specific moment in time or set of social-political circumstances which had been formative, including the Civil Rights movement, industrial (labour) relations and community organizing: “[My] background has distilled into my values. I am determined to respect individuals, to do everything possible to ensure voices are heard, to have faith in people, to believe people are seeking to grow and that given choices people are capable of growth” (Interviewee 2).

Other practitioners described fundamental values but did not immediately link these to particular personal or social experiences. They referred to their values in the context of theories and practice of participa-

action research, and adult learning, all relating to equalization of power in groups. One interviewee remarked, “Community voice is important for me. If there is a ‘power over’ job going on rather than a ‘power of’ I have something to say about it” (Interviewee 3).

For some respondents the values shaping their work comprised an implied rejection of previous approaches and methodologies: “I’m interested in how we can make the world of work an even better place. How can we be more grown up and deal with real anxieties in a grown-up way rather than an idealised or ritualistic way” (Interviewee 4).

Their Identity as OD Practitioners
We asked all participants whether they considered themselves OD practitioners. Most of the survey respondents (90%) confirmed that they did consider themselves OD Practitioners and 10% did not. Five of the eight interviewees described themselves as scholar practitioners. Interestingly, only 34% of survey respondents used the words Organizational Development in their job title.

One interviewee noted recent difficulties in recruiting internal OD support to her organization through employment and recruitment agencies. Organization Development as a search term was not effective, although it is not clear whether this was to do with how job seekers self-identified, how agencies determined job categories, or some other factor.

The demographic profile of survey respondents is of limited value, given that this was not a stratified sample; however, it was noticeable that the majority of all respondents and interviewees were aged 41 or over and that 40% had been in the field for 10 years or more. Life experience was seen by more than one interviewee as a prerequisite for advanced OD practice: “There’s something about living life prior to entering OD more formally. It’s good if you’ve done something else before [...] On a personal level the more experience you have the better the OD practitioner you are.
You learn to honor and express things in certain ways” (Interviewee 3).

Again, with caveats on the data sample, women made up 63% of the respondents and men 37%; 91% self identified as white.

**Their Networks and Connections**
Practitioners relied on a range of informal OD networks. On average survey respondents used 2 networks to stay connected to fellow practitioners. Seventy-five percent used virtual networks and 84% used their networks as a means to “top up” their practice: “Any team or faculty I’ve been involved with, I have tried to maintain contact. It’s been about networking, maintaining professionalism and critical reflective practice with those people” (Interviewee 3).

Teaching on or participating in the NTL UK Certificate Programme provided an important network for many: “NTL membership is my important existing network” (Interviewee 2), and these are likely to be informal and personal connections between learning community members in specific cohorts: “I have informal connections through the [NTL] OD program, and I find these are some of my most useful connections; very meaningful” (Interviewee 5).

Some also network around a specific approach or methodology: “Meeting with other people that think the same way and have energy. We have meetings a few times a year[…] It’s a totally open space, there are no formal speakers” (Interviewee 5).

Efforts are underway to boost the visibility of OD and the inter-connectedness of practitioners through the expansion of the OD Network in the UK. It will be interesting to see how the field adapts to and embraces formal networks. According to one interviewee: “We have to see what will work. […] We need to learn together here what is unique and different” (Interviewee 8).

**What the Data Reveals about UK / European Practice**

**The Kind of Work Practitioners Do**
Survey participants were asked to choose (from a list of 14) the types of work in which they were engaged. More than 50% of all respondents listed the following (most frequent first):

- Change management
- Leadership development
- Culture change
- Coaching
- Learning & Development
- Employee engagement
- Large Scale Interventions

Many of the practices listed above are increasingly integrated into strategic HR practice, which may be a factor in the issues of identity and visibility raised elsewhere. This may also reflect the requirements of commissioning organizations as they learn about the possibilities of OD or consciously take fewer risks. One interesting perspective is that practitioners themselves may be choosing to work in particular ways and neglecting the “tougher” work areas: “I notice people trying to use the improvement of personal development to resolve the design of organizations. Broader work on organizational design provides a container, as it [the issue] may be structural—the psychodynamic and interpersonal is enhanced if the structure is right” (Interviewee 8). This perspective was echoed by another interviewee: “It’s not about methodologies: AI, solutions focused, strength psychometrics…The question is how do you make it organizational wide and not just person-centric?” (Interviewee 5).

One interviewee commented that a Jack-of-all-trades approach was dominant in the UK. Not to align oneself with a single methodology might be a rational choice given the size and nature of the UK market for OD: “In the UK we have less [OD] educated clients so they have no particular expectations. It’s rare anyone asks me to bring a particular methodology when commissioning me. They’ve heard you can do stuff and they’ve heard about you. It’s more about the relationship” (Interviewee 6).

**A Focus on Behavior or the Task?**
A debate emerged over whether behaviour or task were pre-eminent in the UK. Although behavioural sciences were at the root of OD as it first emerged both through NTL in the US and Tavistock in the UK, one interviewee reflected on an initial approach which has amplified over the years into a mode of practice: “[In the] UK it was about attendance to behavior to achieve the task, therefore efforts in the UK focused on organizational defenses with the psychoanalytic influences moving to play in service of task” (Interviewee 2).

However, another interviewee thought that in the UK, the task-focussed tendency had shifted: “I think psychodynamic theory has more of a hold in the UK than the States. The Tavistock Masters in Consulting, for example, shows we have a different heritage[…] The heritage has included the harder edged stuff (staff inspections, work studies, etc.) but it has become more about the people side of change” (Interviewee 4).

**Geography and Psychology**
A stark observation was made by one interviewee:

Not just in the UK, but also in Europe more broadly, [when meeting a new client] they start by talking about the regulatory change and the statutory environment; about White Papers; about new papers; about the immediate context. […] In the UK and Europe you need to know that context and to take it seriously. […] At the Tavistock Institute one of the main areas of enquiry from the beginning was the environment around an organization. It’s no accident this has emerged in the UK first, that it was immediately taken up and has spread around the world. There is something in the smallness of this country (UK) and the consciousness of being an island and always scanning the environment.” (Interviewee 8)

Another interviewee remarked on the impact of geography on OD in the UK: “I would like to see more international perspective in what we do. My biggest worry is the UK practice holds an island mentality” (Interviewee 3).

Some interviewees were willing to acknowledge that the British can live up to their reputation for being more buttoned-up than some of their European
neighbours. One practitioner who works across Europe and in the US modifies his use of language accordingly: “In the US they are used to stronger words. I stretch myself and I am more expressive. The UK is a bit more reserved, for example I do not use words like ‘joy’ or ‘excited’” (Interviewee 5).

Another interviewee makes a deliberate choice to work in different environments: “Sweden provides a good alternative area to practice for me. They are more experimental and playful. I’m not sure if we are experimental enough in the UK. [...] We tend to do things in a ‘proper’ and British way—not doing ‘weird and wonderful’ things” (Interviewee 3).

**Demand for OD**

The dire financial climate in the UK and Europe was not seen to have impacted adversely on overall demand for OD or the kinds of intervention and consultancy for which organizations were willing to pay. Survey respondents were asked if they had observed an increase, decrease, or no change in levels of demand. Seventy-six percent agreed it had increased, 7% that it had decreased and 17% that it had stayed the same. However, when asked about the trends in average spend by clients, 42% thought it had decreased, 36% that it had increased, and 22% thought it had stayed the same.

The UK public sector has been hit particularly hard by the government’s deficit reduction strategy. However, interviewees noted promising signs that OD had not been abandoned in hard times: “There is still lots of demand for change consulting and for interim change, change management, and OD has not been abandoned” (Interviewee 2).

Although OD roles are more prevalent and demand is considered to be stable, one interviewee thought that in the UK it was more often understood as something needed only intermittently: “In the UK there is lots of demand for change consultancy and for interim change, change management. [...] Here it is seen as a short term fix” (Interviewee 5).

**The Relationship between Practice and Scholarship**

The routes OD practitioners in the UK have taken into academic learning have been varied (before or after beginning practice) and the institutions associated with OD learning few. This relative lack of OD infrastructure may also explain the degree to which UK practitioners have connected their ongoing practice to academia: “In the UK there was a massive split between practice and theory. There was very little connection between people working in Universities in OD and those who were scholarly practitioners” (Interviewee 8). The Tavistock Institute was cited as compounding this problem in the late 1990s when it decided that its own journal should be primarily oriented toward academia.

More than one interviewee noted that the disconnect between academic and practice OD was compounded by the fact that, “In the UK practitioners don’t write” (Interviewee 8). A lack of suitable publications was cited but also the issue of time and cost. “If you enter consultancy and you have operational costs you can’t always find the time to do academic work and not get paid” (Interviewee 1).

**How UK and European Practitioners Perceive the Differences Between US and UK**

Of the interviewees, there was a number who had been raised, worked or studied in the US but had largely practiced in the UK. All interviewees were asked to comment on the differences they perceived between OD in the US and in the UK / Europe. Their comments are summarized in *Table 1*.

These observations are interesting and worthy of further study using a larger and more robust sample.

**The Prospects for OD in the UK and Europe**

**The “Health” of the Field**

Interviewees were asked whether they thought OD in the UK and Europe was thriving or waning. Generally, respondents were positive about the state of OD and

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**Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compared with the US, the UK and Europe is seen as...</th>
<th>Compared with the US and Europe, the UK is seen as...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An emerging field with relatively weak identity and visibility and few academic or institutional centers of note;</td>
<td>An established, visible, and recognized field supported by high profile academic institutions and networks;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A consequently less mature (and smaller) market in which OD is not always appreciated for its range and scope, is sometimes seen as a short-term fix, or simply as Learning and Development;</td>
<td>A large and mature market with OD-educated clients who are clear about what they want and who they want it from;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A place with fewer opportunities for and less of a tradition of scholarly practice;</td>
<td>Having a long tradition of scholarly practice;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due to a heritage in work studies, the military and coal mines etc., having a tendency to focus on task with an attention on behavior as a means to achieve the task;</td>
<td>Due to its roots in the human potential movement and the social background of the 60s, a focus on practice which attends to behavior first and task second;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Producing new and exciting ideas not always classified as OD but influential on practice and widely read; and</td>
<td>Characterized by the prominence of technologies and particular techniques (e.g., FutureSearch, World Cafe, AI) with recognized experts in these; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A “younger” field, capable of absorbing current debates around underpinning theories, value and practice of OD without any schism.</td>
<td>A divided field with ongoing debates about theory, value, and practice.</td>
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</table>
optimistic about its future. They felt the field was active, engaged and committed to doing good work, although not all of this took place under the banner of OD: “[It’s] definitely moving forward. It’s not visible in the language of OD: instead it is happening under various labels and is therefore thriving to some extent” (Interviewee 2).

Survey respondents were asked, “What frustrates you about OD?” Common responses (given in open ended responses) were a lack of identity and recognition of the field, and inconsistency both in terms of how OD is defined and how it is executed. One interviewee noted:

“I would say [OD] is often misunderstood but increasingly valued. [...] There are fewer people who think it’s “fluffy,” although there are plenty still. We can be our own worst enemy as there is a lot of “entertrainment,” which is the worst of the industry, although people see through it quickly. My sense is that there is a lot more good work being done but also a lot of snake oil. We will always battle about holding onto our integrity.” (Interviewee 6)

More than one interviewee observed that they saw great practice taking place but not necessarily captured: “We haven’t found a way of celebrating and harnessing it in the UK” (Interviewee 3).

Several interviewees remarked that OD was apparently doing well as an occupation, with more OD and change roles in workplaces, a rise in demand for OD learning and increasing promotion of OD by various organizations: “10 years ago only very weird people did OD. Now it is a job title which we see in many organizations, public and private.”

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The Impact of Global Shifts and Changes

Interviewees talked about how globalization, technological, and scientific advances and the general pace of change had impacted on practice and theory:

“We need to develop practitioners who model working with the uncertainty we’re living in [...]” (Interviewee 4)

The development of technology and the implications of social networking [has] had some impact. [...] There are also changes to the way we work. [...] There are different models emerging—much looser.” (Interviewee 2)

One interviewee wanted, “To help old crusty organizations be less crusty, less command and control, 15 layer organizations won’t be able to survive. I see it in start-ups, and on leading technology. There are more fluid groups that come together then disappear. There needs to be more flexibility.” (Interviewee 5)

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Several interviewees reflected on how global conditions affect OD practice: “I have been considering VUCA: a way of describing the context as volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous. This is the kind of thing OD practitioners should automatically be alert to and ask how do they adapt their complexity and change work.” (Interviewee 1)

For another:

“It’s important because the old way isn’t working, it’s not powerful enough, and it’s just not sustainable enough. When you look at the economic situation, and how they tried to solve Greece. That solution starts creating problems elsewhere, i.e., Spain and we couldn’t have imagined that. We don’t have time anymore to understand the problem and the root causes, by the time the analysis is complete—by then we will be in a deeper problem. I see it not just in OD, I see it in everything—it’s pushing us to a different awareness.” (Interviewee 5)
How Practitioners Want to Support OD Practice to Flourish

The survey asked: What single thing could be done that would make the biggest shift forwards in the field of OD in the UK? Responses (given in open ended responses) centered around the following:

» Raise the profile of OD
» Provide evidence of OD’s impact and value
» Increase OD education (both among organizational leaders and more general).

For some interviewees, a key consideration was bridging the gap between the academic and practice worlds, encouraging more reflective practice and writing, but the lack of suitable publications was noted: “If we don’t have new publications, how do you get academics to write on practice issues and vice versa? [...] Perhaps we should set up a foundation for OD people to buy them the time to allow them to write?” (Interviewee 1) “Practitioners need to write case studies; the pros and cons; tell good stories and discover through this the similarities and differences.” (Interviewee 8)

A forthcoming national OD conference could act as a spur for practitioners to produce papers. Mee-Yan Cheung-Judge described her involvement in the OD Network working to this end: “We hope to develop a network chapter in the UK and anchor this with a high-profile annual conference starting April 2013.”

Some saw the importance of helping organizational leaders to understand OD: “I’m trying to build capacity for culture change. [...] the focus is on high involvement and engagement leadership: Developing skills and practical applications for leaders such as in facilitation skills. Tune them into group dynamics and group processes” (Interviewee 7). “There is [a need for] some basic training for leaders and managers and more complex stuff for senior leaders who need to work across organizations, develop partnerships, and lead on global working. They have got to ‘hold’ bigger and more difficult stuff now” (Interviewee 3).

Interviewees felt that as practitioners, “We should be proud and show more confidence. There is so much data and evidence that what you do makes a difference. Yet we show up sometimes in an apologetic way.” (Interviewee 4)

Another key issue for interviewees was that some UK practitioners focused on acquiring skills at the expense of the in-depth self work. The survey data suggests this is the case with just 26% of survey respondents topping up their practice via T-group/Human Interaction Laboratory for example. One interviewee said, “There are people with a real drive and passion but the core OD practice is Use of Self. They are great technicians but are they doing the self work? I think we have a long way to go as too many are trying to get hold of OD from the task side” (Interviewee 1). As another interviewee agreed, “We should do more self-enquiry work. We must know how we show up and leaders must know how they show up. It is the mainstay of our professional practice.” (Interviewee 3)

Conclusion

A key characteristic of the UK/European OD field is the relatively weak infrastructure for OD, both in terms of its recognition and status as an academic discipline, and in terms of formal practitioner networks and associated journals. This has consequences for the visibility of the profession, the contribution it can claim and the sense of identity amongst some practitioners. Despite these factors, demand for OD consultancy and learning is robust and practitioners are taking on new challenges in a positive way.

Amongst the interview and survey respondents there was general agreement that it was necessary for UK practitioners to write more, evidence their impact, do more self-enquiry, and work together to build a distinct and clear identity for OD. However, there was a sense that this effort must recognize and reflect OD as it is practiced now in the UK and Europe. In particular, there is an opportunity to build on fluid and informal networks, working relationships and information exchanges in terms of co-consulting and publishing. Galvanising these forces could bring a greater sense of connectedness and shared confidence to UK and European OD practice.

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Maxine Gooding has been working in UK financial services and banking for over 24 years. She has a diploma in stress management, is a NLP Master practitioner, and having only recently found OD, has graduated from the NTL program this year. She currently works in the area of behavior and culture change in a banking industry that is only now really coming to terms with what those words mean. She can be reached at maxineta@o2.co.uk.
I should start by saying I do not know Sarah Lewis and just met her briefly when she gave me a copy of this book. I’m saying that so you will know my glowing review is not tainted by association. I started reading it expecting another twist on Appreciative Inquiry from the lead author of one of my top 5 AI books1 but I was in for a very pleasant surprise. This book is not really about Appreciative Inquiry, though at a few key points she links the topics she has just covered in a way that helps people better understand how and why AI works. Instead, this book is a treasure trove of research and models for the practice of good management.

I find most books written by consultants are advertisements for their consulting practice. Many might make a good article. But not this book. This book is a serious review of useful research on positive organization behavior in the past ten years. Because it is written by a consultant, it looks at it from a very practical perspective and it is written in an engaging, easy to follow manner that connects the dots in a way you seldom see. I cannot think of another book I have read in the past decade that does such a good job of integrating a scholar’s concern for research grounded explanations with a consultant’s concern for ideas with leverage.

Sarah Lewis’s writings seem to have this in common – they are attempts to explain to managers with little background in psychology and OB, in frameworks they will understand, why they ought to think about issues and processes OD practitioners often take for granted. This book is, in my opinion, her finest effort to date. None of her assertions about what managers ought to do are based on stories or “her experience” (though she brings those in fluidly to illustrate her points) – they are all based on well informed explanations of the best scientific research.

Using as a starting point the research on organizations as complex adaptive systems, each chapter builds on the previous one. She describes the research on “positive workplaces” and follows the evidence to explain why they result in higher productivity and financial returns. She reviews how “engagement” actually influences organizational outcomes and what the research shows managers can actually do to influence that. She describes Damasio’s work on how emotions influence decision-making and draws clear, practical consequences, making an interesting link to Weick’s work on sense-making as a substitute for decision-making (very provocative, and you will have to read it if you want to know what that means). She does a nice job summarizing Lutheran’s and Avi- olo’s research on positive and authentic leadership, linking these with Rowland and Higgs research on how leaders create change. In her most innovative chapter she brings a variety of models together to look at how managers can influence “positive sustainable growth.” By the end she has made a compelling case for the use of dialogic and emergent approaches to change, like appreciative inquiry and open space, which any thoughtful person will find hard to resist.

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She manages to do all this without a lot of name dropping, distracting referencing, or relying on obtuse academic language. One of my favorite examples comes from her explanation for why personality is not that useful a lever for managers but psychological states are. To explain this she describes the “big five” model of personality without calling it that. The conventional labels for these factors (e.g., neuroticism) are only understood by academics and more likely to create negative and inaccurate connotations in the average person’s mind. Here’s typical Sarah Lewis, “Personality can broadly be understood as the idea that people differ in their patterns of relatively stable traits.

The five key traits are: how outgoing, how responsive to emotions, how agreeable, how conscientious, and how open people are to new experiences.” You will not appreciate just how clear that statement is unless you read a study on the Big Five from an American Psychological Association journal.

You are going to be happy you picked up and read this book if you fall into one or more of the following categories: 1) You left graduate school ten or more years ago and would like to update yourself on the latest OD relevant research on good managerial practice coming out of academia; 2) You like to have research backed explanations for your suggestions and interventions when you talk to clients; 3) You appreciate thinking more deeply about how managers can actually influence people and work, positively. Anyone interested in going underneath the technique of AI to understand why and how it can work will find this book illuminating.

I think it is also a great text for regular “people management” courses in MBA, OD, and EMBA programs. I intend to use it.

Gervase R. Bushe, PhD, is Professor of Leadership and Organization Development at the Beedie School of Business, Simon Fraser University, in Vancouver. His thirty year consulting practice spans redesigning large organizations, facilitating organizational learning, executive team building, architecting cultural change processes, and designing developmental leadership training. The common theme is creating more collaborative work systems. He can be reached through bushe@sfu.ca.
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OD PRACTITIONER is the quarterly journal of the Organization Development Network, an international association whose members are committed to practicing organization development as an applied behavioral science. The Handbook for Strategic HR is edited by: John Vogelsang, Maya Townsend, Matt Minahan, David Jamieson, Judy Vogel, Annie Viets, Cathy Royal, and Lynne Valek

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