Hello, Baltimore, we’re baaack!

We’ve come home again to one of the cities where we’ve had some of our best times. Charm City, the Inner Harbor, the best Little Italy this side of the Atlantic, and the home of the Chesapeake Bay crab.

The locals pronounce it “Ballmer.” The bumper stickers say Be More in B’more. And you know you’re talking to a true local when she calls, you, “Hon!”

Our home this year is the Baltimore Hilton. It’s a new hotel, standing new and 20 stories tall. Across the street to the south is one of the best baseball stadiums in the world, Camden Yards, where the dreadful Baltimore Orioles play. Across the street to the north is the original Marriott Hotel in Baltimore, where we met when we were here in 96 or so. One block west of the new Convention Center, and half a mile from M&T Bank Stadium, where the Baltimore Ravens play the Arizona Cardinals on Sunday.

Two pre-conference sessions on Friday were a gradual beginning for the conference, with about 50 people attending sessions today. Marilyn Laiken led a 2 day workshop on OD and Change Essentials for New and Developing OD Professionals starting this morning; I ran into several participants in the hall way who were all quite abuzz about the day. And the second two day workshop was Lisa Zweber-Smith and Terry Smith lead Sustaining Change—Building Capacity by Creating a Network of Change Agents.

Most of the conference staff arrived last night and today.

And your OD Network board began its two day meeting today as well. The current members of the board include Darya Funches (board chair), Mike Horne (board secretary), Lisa Kimball (conference planning), Matt Minahan (education and professional development), Ava Schnidman (corporate relationships), and Brian Wilson (treasurer.) We were thrilled to welcome the four new board members whose terms begin in January but who joined us for the two day meeting: Mee-Yan Cheung Judge, Carol Parker Walsh, Melisa Sanchez, and Charles Shaw. We thanked Lisa Kimball who is completing her full six year term this December, and Ava Schnidman, who is finishing her one year term this December as well. And, we got a lot of good work done as well.

Most of us went to the Diamond Tavern (a play on the baseball image, and the quality image), looking right across the street at Campden Yards.

It looks like they’re calling for snow tomorrow, but either way, it will be a full and rich day here at the OD Network Conference in Baltimore.
If you’re in the area, there’s still time to register and come by for a day.

If you’re on the list and coming or here, please say “hey” as we pass in the halls!

More tomorrow. Matt

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Matt Minahan matt at minahangroup.com
Sun Oct 30 22:05:35 EDT 2011

The tempo is starting to pick up here today, Saturday, October 29th. We woke to rain and wind, but no sign of snow; it is due here this afternoon. .. but it looks like New York and New England are going to get it bad today. It’s like the third grade here, with all of these adults standing up with our noses against the glass, wondering if we’re going to get a snow day!

In addition to the two that launched yesterday, another pre conference workshop kicked off this morning. Kim Barnes (who I first met in the Bay Area in the early 90s) and Bev Scott (who is a member of our ODNet list, former chair of the OD Network board, good friend and author) led a session called Achieving Success as an Internal Consultant, based on their book called “Consulting on the Inside,” which has just been re-released.

Your OD Network board met all day today, approving the budget for 2012 two months before the beginning of the new financial year, which we take as huge success. We are thrilled with the support and guidance that we are getting from our management company, SmithBucklin. They shared with us several best practices around meeting patterns, board roles, and committee structures drawn from the 100+ organizations to which they consult, and they’ll be introducing a new monthly publication for OD Network members that aggregates content about organizations, management, strategy, and OD and sends around abstracts to key articles with links to view them. This is one wicked service and we’re very excited about it. They also have overhauled our website – go out to www.odnetwork.org to see our new, snazzy logo and the streamlined and simplified web page. They’ve shifted our
member database from a proprietary software program that we could never afford to keep updated and run well to an open source solution which is simple, easy, and self maintained by members. They have increased our sponsor revenue by 50% in just a few months. And, they are working with us on ways to streamline and economize on our conference planning and delivery model. All in all, this is looking like a very healthy and valuable venture for the OD Network and we’re off to a very good start.

And the conference presenters are starting to flood the place, weather permitting, that is. Barbara Bunker made it in from Buffalo before the snow started, but it looks like Billie Alban got snowed into Hartford and may not make it down. Denise Easton, our webinar and e-course partner from ULiveAndLearn arrived today, as did Dick and Emily Axelrod, and Jane Magruder Watkins and Ralph Kelly, and Crissa Merron and many, many more.

Tomorrow, the conference officially opens at 1, with a keynote from Darya Funches. More on that tomorrow!

Matt

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Matt Minahan matthew at minahangroup.com
Mon Oct 31 00:02:33 EDT 2011

What a whirlwind already at this 2011 OD Network Annual Conference, and we’re just getting underway on Sunday, October 30th here in Baltimore.

Two 9 am starts began the day. The People of Color and First Nations Caucus and the First Time Attendees Orientation were held. Then at 10am, I got to work again this year with Stephanie Jo Gomez on the Dick Beckhard Mentoring Program, at which we moderate a process by which mentees meet with mentors and make connections and commitments to meet during the conference. We sorely missed Denny Gallagher this year; it was Denny who conceived and birth this thing almost 10 years ago, and who gracefully handed it off to SJ and me about 5 years ago. We were our competent, capable self in executing Denny’s design again this year, but we surely missed him here with us this year, the first conference that Denny has
missed in almost 30 years, I think.

Also this morning, Kendra Coleman and Steve Bridge, both e.g. Sheppard Moscow designed and facilitated the opening Networking with Intent session, helping participants jump start their conference experience by meeting and engaging colleagues, old and new.

The conference officially kicked off this afternoon, when Tom Nicholson, the Executive Director of the Network welcomed all, thanked the conference planning team, and introduced the members of the Network Board of Trustees. Mike Horne, one of my colleagues on the Board of Trustees, introduced Dr. Darya Funches, Board Chair. Darya acknowledged and thanked Peter Norlin, the OD Network’s Executive Director for most of the past 5 years, and when Peter stood up, the room burst out into applause and warm appreciation for him and his service to the Network (for which he will be honored on Tuesday morning.)

Darya’s keynote was titled “Emerging Faces of Corporations and New Shapes of OD.” She began with a First Peoples’ chant, to honor and acknowledge the people and traditions of those who occupied the space and these lands before us. She mentioned four negative faces of the organization: the faces of degeneration, separation, exploitation, and the beast, and asked us in pairs to come up with archetypes or ideologies and philosophies for these four faces of the organization.

She said that when we are working with the face of separation, we are acting as if we’re not all related or connected to each other and the earth. She reminded us that organizations were initially set up to be “of service, for the public good.” When we think about change, we should be thinking about long term sustainability, and that we should be thinking as the native traditions do, with 7 generations in mind, not the next quarter of the current financial year. Darya said that it is not just about honoring the agreements we make, it is also about making honorable agreements to begin with.

She said when we work in integrity, we are able to consider the aesthetics of things, and we work as if beauty matters. She cited the Navajo prayer, “I walk with beauty in front of me, I walk with beauty in back of me, I walk with beauty beside me, I walk with beauty inside of me.”

As for 21st century OD, Darya challenged us to look at our organizations anthropologically, with indigenous OD, bringing art, and music, and poetry in organizations, to bring forth the creativity and integrity of leaders. Using nature to bring forth shifts. Quantum OD which bring forth the intricacies of systems. And finally, she challenged us to experiment with being crazy, outside of the box. Give yourself permission to do that, in order to see the truth and speak the truth. Use your art. Use your heart, and get the most out of being at the conference.

And then the conference was off to the races! Concurrent sessions Effective OD/HR Relationships with Barbara Bunker, Dick Axelrod, and Chris Trout who is VP of HR for Disney; Uncertainty and Change in Complex Systems with Lisa Kimball, Tom Mandel, and Denise Easton; Mindset and Narrative in Leadership Development with my fellow GWU alum Michele Gundlach; Leadership Development in Global Organizations with Johnny Kelleher and Lucy Hatchell, both with e.g. Sheppard Moscow and Eva Mendel who is a client of their at
the International Finance Corporation at the World Bank.

The first of the affinity groups met this afternoon, when Paul Cadario convened the GLBT group. And there was a standing room only crowd at the Global Forum, which was convened by Peter Kalmar of IODA in Hungary, long time friend Jon Wagner of Canada, Juana Anguita of Chile, and long time member and former board member Karen Davis of the US.

Finally today, the Welcome to Baltimore reception had good food, drinks, and wonderful conversations among sponsors, exhibitors, and attendees.

I’m not sure what we were thinking, but the Network’s Annual Business starts at 7:30 tomorrow morning. Those of you who are here, I hope you can join us in the Key Ballroom 1.

And, if you’re not here yet, there is still time to come Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday.

We’re having a blast. Don’t miss out!

Matt

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