

Matt Minahan's Dailies
OD Network Conference and 50th Anniversary Celebration
October 26-28, 2014
Loew's Hotel, Philadelphia

Friday, October 24, 2014

If you've ever designed a large group intervention or a big party or wedding, you know all about the planning and organizing and logistics that are required. However, if you've ever thrown a party for an old friend's birthday or your parents' anniversary, you know about the extra reverence that comes with honoring a whole life or two in the event. And excitement. And anxiety!

Those are just some of the feelings here in Philadelphia this weekend, as we gather for the OD Network's Annual Conference AND 50th Anniversary Celebration.

Sure, we may see 400 of our closest friends here, but we do that every year. However, building in a remembrance of our 50 years as a Network and honoring all of those upon whose shoulders we now stand is an extra privilege that the Network has been working on for most of a year now. And it all comes together this weekend. Very exciting! And a bit anxiety provoking, too, creating an event to honor the people who have been our leaders, idols, and teachers for all these years!

We'll celebrate the 50 years of the OD Network on Sunday, October 26th from 5:00-6:30 in a special remembrance celebration, followed by a reception to allow everyone to mingle and converse, include with Warner Burke (the founding ED of the OD Network in 1964 and still teaching at Columbia), Fred Miller (former board member, long-time supporter, benefactor, and member), Billie Alban (first actual board chair, in 1975), Karen Davis (long-time supporter, former board member, and one of the leaders of the International OD Association [IODA]), Brenda Jones (former board chair and long-time member), Barbara Bunker (long time member and supporter), Stokes Carrigan (long time member, former board member, and convener of Men in OD for more than 20 years), Diane Carter (former board member), Rich Ungerer (the Network's first full time ED, from 1995-2000), Marv Weisbord and Sandra Janoff (of the Future Search Network and long-standing Network supporters and members), Peter Sorensen and Therese Yaeger (celebrating their own 50th anniversary at Benedictine University in the program that Peter started at George Williams College), Mila Baker (former board chair and long-time supporter), Dick and Emily Axelrod (members, supporters, authors, award winners), Peter Norlin (long time member and ED from 2009-2011), June Delano (former board chair and long-time member), Barry Oshry (purveyor of The Power Lab), and many more than I can mention here.

As you can imagine, it will be wonderful to see all of these wise (and gray) heads all together here, and we are honored and privileged to be hosting the event that brings them all together.

Meanwhile, there's a great selection of pre-conference workshops lined up for Saturday, including Lead More, Control Less (Sandra Janoff and Marv Weisbord), The Organization Workshop (Karen and Barry Oshry), An Intergenerational Learning Exchange (Jeff Branch and colleagues), The Change Canvas (Jill

Hinson and colleagues), A Facilitated Cross Generational Dialogue (Izzy Gesell), OD with Agile and Lean (Steve McGee), and The Power of Emotions in Organizations (Pravir Malik).

There's still room for you! Join us at the Loew's Philadelphia.

More tomorrow. Matt

Saturday, October 25, 2014

Last week's Nor'easter has pulled out, taking the rain with it, and leaving us with sunny 65 days and cool 45 degree nights here in Philadelphia, where, at the Loew's Hotel on Market Street, we are having the OD Network's Annual Conference and 50th Anniversary Celebration.

There aren't many conferences like ours that have their own apps. BUT WE DO! No matter where you are, you will LOVE the OD Network Conference app in iTunes and the Play Store! It is the coolest, handiest thing for attending our conference. It contains a list of speakers, sessions, other participants, local places, and neat connections to other social media such as LinkedIn and Twitter. Search apps for OD Network 2014. And be part of the cool! (Having the app also legitimizes all of the bowed heads and fixed gazes while people wander the halls. See my comments on the Community Room at the end of this for the antidote to that!)

One of the ways we're celebrating our 50th Anniversary is with a whole track of presenters who are OD Network Life Achievement Award recipients. What a great lineup of our teachers and mentors and the leading lights of our field, all gathered here and willing to present! Their sessions are running through the whole conference. Starting Sunday are:

- Mee Yan Cheung-Judge on Can We Love Theories Too Much?
- Brenda Jones along with Patricia Bidol-Padva on Change Happens: Tip the Scales Using the 3 Cs.

Monday's Lifetime Achievement Award presenters are:

- David Jamieson along with Deb Lindh on Cultivating Healthy Organizations: What Are They and How Can We Create Them?;
- Judith Katz and Fred Miller on The Boss Is Dead: The Future of Leadership and its Implications for OD;
- David Sibbet, on Facing Climate Change: Exploring Large Scale Multi-Stakeholder Processes;
- Dick and Emily Axelrod, on The Meeting Design Challenge; and
- Barbara Bunker, on Reflecting on the OD Value of Always Working on Your Self

Howzat for a great lineup of people and talent?

In addition to celebrating our 50 years as a Network, this year's conference has three tracks: Change and Agility: With the world continuously changing around us, organizations and other systems must be

agile in order to stay relevant and thrive; Diversity and Culture: We live in a globally connected world where understanding culture and diversity enables us to be community builders and change agents; and Technology and Tools: The last decade has introduced an unprecedented new wave of technology and tools that has changed the way we connect and work.

There are three basic kinds of hotels for conferences like the OD Network's.

There are hotels where the conference rooms, hotel desk, and main entrance are all on the same floor, such as site of last year's conference in San Jose. Those are hotels where just hanging out in the lobby is where you get to see the comings and goings of members.

There are hotels where the reception area is in one building, but the sleeping rooms and conf space are in separate buildings, such as the site of our 2012 conference in Arizona.

Then there are vertically stacked hotels, such as the Loew's here in Philadelphia. You arrive at one level, conference rooms are up a two or three floor elevator ride, and then sleeping rooms are up further. In this case, the lobby isn't where the action . . . it's in the Community Room, which is a great place to hang out! There's a message board for conference attendees to leave messages for each other. We've had popcorn machines and other goodies there in years past. The sponsors are also present. It's the hang out for the conference. The downside is you can't see and greet people as they check in to the hotel . . . but the good news is that the conference has a clear center of gravity and the community room is it.

Today, we saw pre-conference presenters arrive and greet each other, sponsors setting up their tables and displays, tomorrow's presenters check out their charts and slides, participants hanging out to get onto wifi, and share info from our spectacular conference app, staff checking on setups and arrangements, all happening in the Community Room. It's humming!

Tomorrow, it's affinity groups in the morning, the welcome and mentoring sessions for newcomers, the opening keynote by Stacey Blake-Beard, two rounds of concurrent sessions, and then our 50th Anniversary Celebration is Sunday at 5:00. Still time join the fun!

And, no matter where you are, you will LOVE the OD Network Conference app!

More tomorrow. Matt

Sunday, October 26, 2014

I can't remember a conference with as much anticipation as this one. Nor can I remember a conference that began with a fire drill! Remembering our elders and betters from the past 50 years of the Network's existence . . . gathering many of them here for the celebration . . . two full days of conference content . . . and then a day of Open Space on Tuesday with Harrison Owen, focused on the future of the field of OD. Lots and lots of energy and excitement about all of it!

This morning was the gathering of affinity groups, including the People of Color Caucus, the Global Forum, Latinos/as in OD, Men in OD, Regional Leaders in OD, Spirit in the Workplace, the Global Forum, LGBTQ Practitioners in OD, and the OD Education Association, or ODEA, which I wrote about in this summer's OD Practitioner. Also this morning, we convened the New Practitioners Networking and Orientation for people attending their first conference, which is always one of my favorite sessions.

I had the honor of convening the Dick Beckhard Mentoring Session, along with fellow board member Yasmeen Burns. Each year we use a speed dating methodology to introduce experienced practitioners to newer practitioners for a series of mentoring conversations for the duration of the conference. Some last well beyond that, but we're only asking for a three day commitment. It's so great to have 75 or 100 people gathered with such high hopes, energy, and good will for such a good cause . . . and in memory of another great in our field, Dick Beckhard.

As people started to gather for the conference opening, the hotel fire alarm went off . . . shutting down the elevators, escalators, and chasing all 450 souls gathered for the conference opening to leave the building. As Laura Rudzinski, our ED, said in her opening remarks, "Isn't that a meeting planner's worst night mare!"

After the false alarm and people straggled back in, the conference opened with a welcome from Yasmeen Burns, Co-chair of the conference planning committee for '14, and Marisa Sanchez, chair of the board of trustees for '14, who reminded us that the Beatles and Supremes and the Mustang and the first James Bond movie were all part of 1964, when the Network was launched. Laura Rudzinski, our Executive Director, spoke about the values and priorities of the OD Network and its full range of member services, including our partnership with Synermetric, which offers our Network members a great range tools for doing our work.

Board member and conference co-chair Norm Jones and board member Sherry Duda introduced the opening keynote speaker, Stacey Blake-Beard, Professor of Management at the Simmons School of Management where she teaches organizational behavior. She has worked in sales and marketing at Procter & Gamble and in the corporate human resources department at Xerox. Her research focuses on the challenges and opportunities offered by mentoring relationships, with a focus on how these relationships may be changing as a result of increasing workforce diversity with a particular interest in the issues women face as they develop mentoring relationships.

What a dynamo she is! She eschewed the stage, instead wandering the aisles of the plenary, traveling the room like the professor she truly is. She had us work in small groups and report out why we joined the Network and what we thought our challenges were going forward. She sang "I Will Survive" as a way to end the breakout work and return to plenary.

She used the Journey as the metaphor for her session, beginning with Recognize who we are and the world in which operate, Transform and understand who we are and how we live in our social identity groups, and finally Energize, looking into the future.

We completed a Social Identity Profile, asking us to declare which two we most identify with, among gender, race, religion, social class, age, sexual orientation, nationality, education, other, both in our work lives and our OD Network lives. We then discussed the patterns we saw emerging, those groups to

which we attribute the most pleasant outcomes, the group membership where we feel most challenged, and the implications for the Network and the field. Participants shared their feelings about class, and education, and gender, and race and being unusually tall. And then unusually short. And being gay, or Latina, and how hard it is to say one thing about “where are you from” and much much more.

She encouraged us to action, sharing a card that she keeps with her journal, saying, “This is your world; shape it, or someone else will.” And she shared a picture of autumn leaves over water with the saying, “In the end, everything will be OK, and if it’s not OK, it’s not the end.”

There were final comments that we as a profession need to be much more activist in confronting the imbalances of power, and by inference, money, wealth, and class. And Stacey’s final guidance to us was “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

The two rounds of concurrent sessions that followed made for some tough choices! Gib Mason on Disruptive Intervention for Agility, Jude Olson on Lightning Squad Reinvention, Mila Baker on Peer-to-Peer Leadership, Eric Nihat Elli on Start Up Multinationals in the Middle East, Neal Goodman on Building Cultural Competence, Brad Margolis on Using New Tools for Teams, Craig Petrun on why we can’t “Just Do It” with Change, Lisa Nielsen on Stakeholder Engagement Plans, Yvette Montero Salvatico on Bridging Cultures, Dylan Dalton on Catalyzing Your Non Profit Board, Deborah Peck on Turning Intuition into Science, and Carlos Valdes-Dapena on Collaboration in a Culture of Individual Achievement.

In the Lifetime Achievement Track, Mee-Yan Cheung-Judge led Can We Love Theories Too Much, and Brenda Jones led Change Happens: Tip the Scale Using the 3 Cs, along with Pat Bidol-Padva.

The day culminated with the 50th Anniversary of the OD Network celebration and reception. Ilene Wassermann and Jeff Branch led a planning committee which designed the event and led us through it today. As participants arrived, they were invited to view and add their own personal events to the 40 foot long timeline on the wall, tracking the major events and developments in the life of the OD Network and the field. Jeff and Ilene did an excellent job of honoring the founders and elders in the room, and in creating dialogue among the many generations of OD practitioners. At one point, they had us line up according to when we joined the field of OD. We were enormously privileged to have in the room people who joined the field in the early 60s, such as Karen Davis, Barbara Bunker, Denny Gallagher, Fred Nader, (more in his Lifetime Achievement Award in tomorrow’s report), Stokes Carrigan, Diane Carter, Brenda Jones, Pat Bidol-Padva. The timeline almost circled the entire ball room. Jeff asked us to notice the demographics of the line, focused on age, gender, race, and other demographics as the line wound from olders to newer practitioners. It was a wonderful visual snapshot of who were, are, and who we are becoming as a field . . . and probably as a world . . .

After a full and rich day, it was a struggle to drag myself into the Networking Reception. Until I got there. Then, the beautifully decorated space, the jazz trio’s music, the great array of sponsors, the photo booth, and the ton of energized people was a great tonic at the end of a rich and rewarding day.

In all, it was a wonderful and exhausting day . . . but a once in a lifetime opportunity to see the history of the field recreated before our very eyes.

Tomorrow, Warner Burke is our opening keynoter, and then we have a full day of concurrent sessions.

Can’t wait . . . to get some rest ;-) and to dive in tomorrow!

Matt

Monday, October 27, 2014

Note to next year's planning committee: 8am is an awfully early start for a plenary! But this one made getting up early well worth it.

Our Monday keynoter was Warner Burke. Warner was the first ED of the OD Network. He is an author, researcher, and professor at Columbia University

Warner Burke on Loosely Coupled Systems -- a fancy set of words that means "a network." OD is based largely on work with tightly coupled systems. Our mantra has been to loosen up very tightly coupled systems. Our leading general in the army fighting against the bureaucracy was Warren Bennis, who just died a few months ago. He was sadly wrong when he predicted that bureaucracy would be dead by the end of 1970, and laughed at himself when he wrote "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Future."

We can't afford to get caught in either-or thinking, especially about organizations, which are both loosely coupled – example, the OD Network, AND tightly coupled as well – example, the US Army.

He cited Al Qaeda, a cache of whose documents were found last year, including receipts for food, munitions, spreadsheets with financial details, a salary structure, position descriptions, and even job vacancy announcements. So, even this mostly loosely coupled system was tightly coupled in many ways.

He said that all systems have two key attributes – hierarchy, and interdependence and he cited Orton and Weick's work to consider a loosely coupled system:

1. Causation
 - a. causal indeterminacy, or unclear means-ends connections
 - b. fragmented, dynamic external environment
 - c. fragmented internal environment, that is high differentiation and little integration
2. Type of couplings, which can be loosely or tightly coupled: individuals, subunits, organizations, hierarchical levels, organization external environments, ideas, activities, intentions and actions
3. Compensations, or creating ways to tighten a system include
 - a. more emphasis on leadership
 - b. creating focused effort, and
 - c. shared values
4. Organizational outcomes – the looser the coupling, the more difficult it is to determine what causes what

Warner told the story of his intervention to "tighten up" a loosely coupled system, the A. K. Rice Institute. It was a two year project to install a clearer mission statement returning to the original and primary values of the Institute, to serve the public and educate people about group dynamics and covert processes. Membership in A. K. Rice had become more important than delivering training. After an inclusive process lasting almost 2 years, an almost unanimous vote affirmed the new structures. Which, after a year, were almost dissolved, reverting back to the membership nature of the system. Upon

reflection, the failure was likely due to the fact that we in OD specialize in loosening up tightly coupled systems, but are not that good in tightening up loosely couple system. (Warner tells this story in great detail, with loads of details and lessons learned, in his JABS article:

<http://jab.sagepub.com/content/46/4/473.refs>)

Warner previewed his article coming out in the 50th Anniversary issue of JABS later this year, applying our standard consulting model to loosely coupled systems. He said in a tightly coupled system, Entry occurs as close to the top as possible; in a loosely coupled system, you can enter anywhere. In a tightly coupled system, you want to Contract with one person who has responsibility; in a loosely coupled system, you want to contract with everyone, or as many as possible. In a tightly coupled system, you collect data by choosing a sample and a method; in a loosely coupled system, you use multiple methods and interview as many people in the system as possible.

Warner then turned to Learning Agility, which has been an interest of his for 5 years. He cited some Lominger research that there is a connection between learning agility and effective leadership. To be learning agile, one must have attained a threshold of learning ability. And, learning agility has at least two primary components, skill and motivation. He also cited studies that indicate that the brain creates new neurons

He describes motivation as one's willingness to take risks in attempting to deal with a novel situation when not knowing exactly what to do. And being willing to risk your self esteem in the interest of trying to learn something that you don't already know. And being flexible, speedy to take action, and avoiding defensiveness.

Warner shared a model from a lit review on learning agility:

http://www-personal.umich.edu/~cgmyers/iop2012_learningagility.pdf

One big problem with understanding our own learning agility is our propensity to over rate ourselves – on just about every dimension. The only way to validate or verify our self perception is to seek out multiple perspectives from multiple sources, to counteract our inclination to over rate ourselves.

Some dimensions to consider include, the extent to which I seek feedback, or take on new assignments that are challenging, collaborate with colleagues, experiment with new ideas, critically reflecting and evaluating, flexibility, get up to speed quickly on new tasks or projects . . . and what about defensive reactions, which, when we try to measure in people, we get defensive reactions!

When Suzanne Zaldivar asked Warner for his views on the profession as the Network enters its 6th decades. He cited Chris Argyris' work on defensive reactions, but didn't tell us more about how we might be doing or avoiding them as a profession.

I got to participate in 3 of the Lifetime Achievement Award recipient sessions, and that, by itself was the experience of a lifetime. There was some kind of magic cooking in Congress A this afternoon.

I had the privilege to introduce the session led by Dick and Emily Axelrod , where they shared and we worked on their canoe model for meetings, based on their book Let's Stop Meeting This Way. 25 million, 67% meeting failures, 37b per year

They offered their Three Big Ideas:

- meetings are places where work gets done. Meetings are the factory floor of knowledge work, made effective by
 - Autonomy – everyone in the room can influence the direction
 - Meaning – clear understanding of your role and why you are there
 - Challenge – a problem to solve
 - Learning – about the other department, my own department, or myself
 - Feedback – information about how I or we are doing
- Meetings are a snapshot of your culture
 - What we do in our meetings is what we do in all of our work
 - One small change can have an enormous impact
- Meetings are better with The Meeting Canoe, or how you structure the conversation in a meeting:
 - Welcome people into work and the space
 - Connect people to each other and the task
 - Discover the way things are
 - Elicit people's dreams
 - Decide on next steps
 - Attend to the end

Don't forget about the decision ground rules – who will make the decision, how will we make the decision, what will we decide

And then don't forget about attending to the ending, by reviewing the decisions, creating a roadmap going forward, and reflecting on your accomplishments at the meeting.

As if the Axelrods' session wasn't great enough . . . the next session in Caucus A was Lifetime Achievement Award winner David Sibbet, and Gisella Wendling on Facing Climate Change: Exploring Multi-Stakeholder Processes. The participants in this session came out with stars in their eyes, as it always is in a David Sibbet session.

I then had the privilege of introducing Life Achievement Award Winner Barbara Bunker, in that very same Congress A. Many, many thanks to Laura Johanssen for taking the following very detailed notes on this wonderful session. Laura gives you a rich and comprehensive sense of what happened in the room in Barbara's session, "Reflecting on the OD Value of Working on Yourself":

Barbara: John Vogelsang called me to invite me to submit to the OD Practitioner - Issue on value. I thought.. "Oh, sh*t. Values is not my thing.. I mean I'm not anti-values."

Then floating around my pool, I started about values: starting thinking about my early days at NTL – and my use of self. What has happened in our profession around the Use of Self. I realized I do have a lot to share.

Today: I'll talk about the early days. Then we'll talk about where we are now. And where we are headed.

1960s – I was a graduate student. Went back to grad school at 33 years old. 10 years older than most of the other students.

Mort Duetsch – post WWII – had influenced social psychology. I had been an undergraduate at Wesleyan – Social psychology. Mort Deutch was the professor and was a Lewin student.

Post WWII – influenced the thinking. We were discussing: Stanley Milgram's experiments on authority, Solomon Ash's 3 line experiments on social pressure to conform. Authoritarian personality – democratic processes – not doing bad things to people. Building on work that Ron Lippett had done in 1938 – studies on leadership styles –

What stood out – we were very interested in Argyris. Espoused theory vs theory-in-use. Lee Bohlman – talked about his mother – his family was clear about the value of honesty. Mom and Lee went to the movies, and his mother bought tickets for one adult and one child, even though Lee was two weeks older than 12? Lee tried to dispute,, but there was a look from his mother . . . a clear example of the difference between values espoused (honesty) versus values in action (save money when you can

Pre-Argyris. My experience. Uof C- theological degree. 1956-64- I was at Duke. Duke was white. I was in student activities during the time of sit-ins. We collaborated with traditional black colleges across town. We became organizers to protest Duke's policies. The faculty that joined us were from sociology, psychology, from all different religious heritages, many of whom were non-practicing at that point. One of the ways they enacted their values was by getting involved in the social change.

In the OD field, many have a strong values orientation, certainly in my generation – it's prevalent just under the surface. We were expected to work on ourselves and not do bad things to other people.

As a graduate student – 1960s – apex of psychoanalysis. I had a psychoanalyst – Great investment. Helped me understand my triggers – confrontations & conflicts. 1970s- how do we understand strong emotion coming at us – I learned the only solution is to walk toward it. I had to learn it. You have to figure out – “what your flat sides are” – where you need to work on yourself. Where do I get uptight. Therapy is one way to work on it. What is the affect that impacts you?

I tried for 4 years to get accepted into 9 week NTL program at Bethel – required if you wanted to get into OD. I was working on why I didn't get angry. I had to practice being angry. Sam Culver – gave me an image for me to work – I want you to envision being furious – hurling plates and anything in reach. So, we moved to Buffalo – and my husband did something that infuriated me and there was a carton of ice cream – and I thought I could paste him with it and I thought – why not, and did. I threw the carton of ice cream right at him. This kind of acting out – was what was needed to get in touch with ourselves and we learned so much because if I have a client who is angry and I have a boundary – and I can deal with this across the boundary. Clarifying your own sense of boundaries and you need to make decisions about what you will do. You have to make choices.

I also remember Harvey Hornstein my colleague – he said, “the same counterdependent jerk shows up in all the groups I do, everywhere. ”

Self-Development: How it occurs.

1) Feedback Johari Window: the world is easier to cope with if there is more of you that is understood by others and more of you is available to you. Feedback is that glorious mechanism – so you can understand how people experience you. One place you get information on your flat sides is from feedback.

2) Another place is from mentors = Another form of feedback. I was at that 9 week summer lab in Bethel, which I had been trying to get into for 4 years, and was talking about needing to leave to collect my research data. Charlie Seashore simply said, "Maybe this isn't the summer for you." He clarified for me – what I needed to do, what's happening for you

3) Self-reflection- go to these sessions and start thinking about self-work

4) Colleagues- we are in a profession where there is no right answers. This is complex work. We have to rely on colleagues to help each other. You have to talk to have people to talk to. They have to be different enough – so you get different perspectives.

I have always treated myself like a project over the years. You give yourself wiggle room to experiment, learn – not have to get everything right.

Current Reality- large group discussion

So, my advice is to go to school to get a degree, but I wonder if the self-reflection is happening. That piece is missing? A participant said that AU is really focused on use of self. Barbara: Richard Stackman from USF and I did the program review at AU last month. I used to think it was woo- woo, but they have updated it recently and now they are doing some great work.

Many thanks again for these wonderful notes to Laura Johansson.

Following these three wonderful sessions in Congress A, we moved to ballroom for the wonderful Awards Ceremony. I'll write about that tomorrow.

But that's a wrap from an exhausted scribe on another wonderful day here in the City of Sisterly and Brotherly love.

Your scribe. Matt

Tuesday, October 28, 2014

In my last missive, I didn't have the energy to include the details of our Awards Ceremony last evening, but it was wonderful! The amazing Lisa Kimball did another amazing job of leading the Network's acknowledgment of its amazing honorees.

Our Awards Committee seeks to recognize and celebrate outstanding contributions and achievements in serving the field of organization development. This year's committee members included Mila Baker, Barbara Bunker, Davd Jamieson, John Vogelsang and chair and event host Lisa Kimball. The awardees were:

13th Annual Student Paper Presentations, 2014 Award Winner: Eerika Hedman, *University of Jyväskylä* and Eleni Gesch-Karamanlidis, *Texas A&M University*: "Facilitating Conversations That Matter Using Coordinated Management of Meaning Theory"

6th Annual Student Research Colloquium Showcase (SRC): 2014 Award Winner: Shirley Knobel, *Fielding Graduate University*
"Becoming a Leader: A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Study of the Lifeworld of Nelson Mandela"

Service to the OD Network In Honor of Frederick A. Miller: *Denise Easton*

Outstanding Regional Network: *Philadelphia Region Organization Development Network – PRODN, Jeff Branch, President*

Organizational Excellence in OD: *LRN – Dov Seidman, founder and CEO*

Communicating OD Knowledge In Honor of Larry Porter: *Edward Lawler*

Outstanding Article in the *OD Practitioner*: *Matt Minahan, Ed.D. and Peter Norlin, Ed. D., "Edging Toward the Center: An Opportunity to Align Our Values, Our Practices, and the Purpose of Our Work," OD Practitioner, Vol.45 No.4 2013*

Sharing the Wealth In Honor of Kathie Dannemiller: *Marv Weisbord & Sandra Janoff, The Future Search Network*

Lifetime Achievement Awards: *Judith H. Katz, Ed.D. and Frederick Nader*

Special Recognition: *Jay Galbraith*

There are details about all of the awards, including previous recipients and the criteria for selection at www.odnetwork.org under About Us, then Member Awards.

Tuesday was a day of Open Space. Harrison Owen led us in the ritual that, for many, was their first exposure to the methodology. He explained that this gathering of about 250 people was going to design the day that it wanted to have, talking about the things that we want to talk about, and creating the future that we wanted to be responsible for.

Our topic was "Creating the Future of OD." Harrison invited each person in the room to come forward and announce a topic that was of interest, take responsibility for posting it to our announcement wall, and then convening the conversation among people with a similar interest. He reminded us of the 4 principles and one rule of Open Space, which follow here from:

http://www.openspaceworld.com/brief_history.htm

"What's the secret? Some have suggested that the Four Principles and One Law which guide behavior in Open space provide the clues. The principles are: **1)Whoever comes is the right people**, which reminds

people in the small groups that getting something done is not a matter of having 100,000 people and the chairman of the board. The fundamental requirement is people who care to do something. And by showing up, that essential care is demonstrated. 2) **Whatever happens is the only thing that could have**, keeps people focused on the here and now, and eliminates all of the could-have-beens, should-have-beens or might-have-beens. What is is the only thing there is at the moment. 3) **Whenever it starts is the right time** alerts people to the fact that inspired performance and genuine creativity rarely, if ever, pay attention to the clock. They happen (or not) when they happen. 4) Lastly **When it's over it's over**. In a word, don't waste time. Do what you have to do, and when it's done, move on to something more useful.

The Law is the so called *Law of Two Feet*, which states simply, if at any time you find yourself in any situation where you are neither learning nor contributing – use you two feet and move to some place more to your liking. Such a place might be another group, or even outside into the sunshine. No matter what, don't sit there feeling miserable. The law, as stated, may sound like rank hedonism, but even hedonism has its place, reminding us that unhappy people are unlikely to be productive people.”

And then the people in the room – we all – proposed conversations that we were interested in, passionate about, and willing to take responsibility for. In all, there were something like 50 sessions that were held, on topics ranging from how to bring more heart to our OD work, to interrupting the school-to-prison pipeline, doing a better job of talent management, solving the poverty problem, releasing the free spirit of the workplace, living our values around inclusion, building a better OD practice, creating competencies for the future of the field, becoming more global, making the network more international, becoming a more welcoming and diverse community and dozens more. There were some people who practiced the rule of two feet and wandered away. But most of us dove into those conversations with passion and commitment.

Each group was asked to summarize its discussion in notes to be sent to the OD Network office, where they will all be compiled and published to our website, where they will be made available to all of the conference participants from this year, the conference planners for next year, and the world. I've included the report out from one of the groups below. Its scribe and convener said that she LOVED the conference . . . AND that this session was a high point for her . . . which gives you an indication of the type of energy that was released by the Open Space.

At the end of the day, we gathered to debrief and for a bit of a check out. I was late arriving so I don't have good notes on what was said. The few comments that I heard about the Open Space were all very very positive. There were some people who seemed to appreciate the opportunity to create. To generate. To be self determinative. To set the agenda for themselves, rather than to select from a pre-planned conference schedule. And of course, that's what Harrison Owen has been telling us about Open Space all these years. That all we have to do is to get out of the way and let the Open Space be filled with the passion and energy of people who are committed and who will take responsibility. (Our early conference evaluation data seems to indicate that there was also a large number of people who appreciated the schedule and structure of the first two days of the conference and for whom the Open Space didn't make sense or didn't work . . . so there was a mix of views about the value of the pre-planned schedule versus a completely emergent one . . . as, I suppose, is the case in life!)

Many, many thanks to Harrison Owen, who modeled in the best possible way how to be invisible as the Open Space convener, to make it about us and the work and not about him. And, he ended the day by

saying that this technology is totally free and can be done by anyone. There is no certification course. No license you have to get. No dues you have to pay. No test you have to pass to do Open Space.

Some final thoughts tomorrow, but for now, here's an example of the kind of thinking that was going on in just one of the groups:

OPEN SPACE REPORT

Tuesday Oct. 28, 2014 ODN Annual Conference, Philadelphia

Theme: **What is the learning edge of the OD profession?**

Convener: Suzanne Zaldivar, smz@inspired-inc.com

Participants: 15 people (sorry, I didn't capture the names!)

Discussion/Recommendations:

Intriguing questions:

- How to catalyze the culture of the OD profession?
- Why do we repeat the old stuff instead of talk about new stuff?
- How to coalesce insights/observations from blogs?
- Can we bring in people to conferences who have experienced OD and hear from them? Hear from people experiencing the change?
- Are we hiding behind our values?
- Are we hiding behind the academic piece?
- Are we only interested in members who identify themselves as OD professionals?
- Can we expand what we mean by OD professional?
- Is OD the "how" or a professional identity?
- What is the purpose of publishing?
- Can we broaden our profession beyond the walls of OD and North America?
- Who else can we bring to the discussion? What other professions and worldviews do we want to hear from?

Observations:

- We have calcified as a profession in order to gain credibility – it has led to lack of flexibility
- However, why do we talk more about credibility than impact?
- Are stories just as powerful as studies?
- One company invited people to tell stories in quality meetings.
- We could invite clients to conferences and consult to them in a well-designed way that encourages productive dialogue
- We could set up a virtual community of practice in advance of a conference – why interact just once a year?
- We need to hang out on the fringes more
- Values serve to ground us, but we exclude - are we exclusively inclusive?
- We need to bridge paradigms
- Everything goes better with OD on it
- How do we make OD ordinary?
- Let's focus less on the OD profession and more on the professional use of OD
- What if OD was free and we gave it away?
- How do we teach OD to others not in the profession?
- How do we learn OD – get inspired by those not in the profession?

Final Thoughts and Thanks – OD Network Annual Conference 2014, Philadelphia

It is almost impossible to thank and appreciate everyone who made this conference the whopping success that it was. But there are a few names that definitely need to be mentioned and organizations that need to be recognized.

First, a HUGE thank you to our sponsors! Gold sponsors:

- Benedictine University, which itself is celebrating 50 years of graduate education in OD with masters and doctoral programs both in Lisle (suburban Chicago) and Springfield, IL;

--Case Western Reserve University, where the Weatherhead School of Management houses the Masters of Science in Positive Organization Development; and

-- Fielding Graduate University, with masters and doctoral programs in OD and interdisciplinary studies.

Our two Silver Sponsors were:

-- Lee Hecht Harrison, offering talent mobility solutions at every level for every employee; and

-- Pepperdine University, with its Masters of Science in OD program and doctoral programs as well.

Second, we owe a huge THANK YOU to the conference planning committee that selected the theme for this year's conference, scouted out key note speakers, wrote the request for proposals, evaluated the 300+ proposals that were submitted, and shaped the accepted proposals into a strong, appealing, and coherent conference whole. HUGE kudos to conference co-chairs Yasmee Burns and Norm Jones, both of whom also serve on the OD Network Board of Trustees. Their committee included Ana Elsa Aviles, Lori Blander, Jeff Branch, Cherie Del Carlo, Laura Gramling, Robert Greenleaf, Rebecca Lehner, Jim Leming, Jennifer Paxton, Lasya Perepa, Cathy Royal, Eric Sanders, Heather Sherbert, Sioux Thompson, Ton Voogt, Todd Walther, and Ilene Wassermann.

And finally, to the fabulous staff of our OD Network office in Chicago. What a HUGE accomplishment this has been, executed briskly and ably and with tons of life, spirit, hats, balloons, origami butterflies, and photo booth funnies! Many many thanks to our Executive Director Laura Rudzinski, Operations Manager Christie Smaidris, Senior Operations Assistant Rebecca Holloway, our Education Dept staff including Tricia Chiamas, Chris Ballman, Kiersten Stokes and others, and to our marketing staff, led by Andrew Werfelmann.

If you're gonna have a party for 450 of your closest friends, call these guys because they made it look easy and fun, when we all know that it was lots of work and plenty of headaches . . . none of which was evident to any of us.

By now, I think we've all recovered! Already, the thinking and planning is underway for next year's conference, October 20-23, 2015, in Portland, OR. In addition to making our third visit to Portland, we are most excited about co-producing this conference with the International Organization Development Association, or IODA. They are our long time friends and colleagues, and we worked together in co-producing the 2010 World OD Summit in Budapest, which was a smashing success and a wild and wonderful time for all there. We are looking forward to the synergies from working together, and I'm delighted that Peter Kalmar, President of IODA, will co chair the '15 Conference Planning Committee, along with Lori Blander of the OD Network, who will be working on her third conference planning team and leading her first.

One final, personal note. This will be my last set of daily conference diaries. After 14 years of completely incomplete and officially unofficial musings about OD Network conferences, this is my last. I started this little enterprise at our 2001 conference in Vancouver. You may recall that we held that conference just 6 weeks after 9/11 and for most of us, it was our first air travel anywhere and our first international travel since the tragedy. At the time, we had 13 ODNet email discussion lists, serving various groups, such as New Professionals in OD, and People of Color, and LGBTQs, and gODparents, and healthcare, etc. These reports were intended to keep in the loop those who had hoped to come but who couldn't, following 9/11. Most of these reports are posted at <http://www.odnetwork.org/?page=PastConf>

Over the years, they've grown well past their original intent, both in scope and length. By now, social media has overtaken even regular email dispatches; Twitter wants 140 characters 20 times a day, and there are lots of people who vibrate at those frequencies, even though I don't. So, thanks to those of you who read and write every time I post one of these. I know that via our LinkedIn group, our Facebook page, and our Twitter handles (#ODN14 and @ODNetwork) there will be much much more coverage and from many many more people than just your humble scribe, as has already been the case these past few years.

Join the OD Network www.odnetwork.org and plan now to attend in 2015 in Portland. Last time we were there in 2003, I was co-chair of the conference planning committee, along with the wonderful Stephanie-Jo Gomez. This time back in 2015, I'm serving as chair of the Board of Trustees.

Til then, be well, and do good.

Your humble scribe. Matt Minahan
