

To: [odnet@lists.odnetwork.org](mailto:odnet@lists.odnetwork.org)  
Date: Saturday, November 12, 2005  
Subject: [odnet] ODN in Minneapolis – Day 1

I must confess a certain unwillingness to come to Minnesota, this being my first time. I've had a certain bias against this place since they enticed Calvin Griffith to move my Washington Senators up here and changed their name to the Minnesota Twins. That was in 1963. Old grudges die hard!

But, what's not to like about the town that brought you Loni Anderson, all three of the Andrews sisters, Garrison Keilor, Robert Bly, the film directing Coen brothers, and Mary Tyler Moore, Lou Grant, Ted Baxter, Murray, Betty White, Rhoda Morgenstern and the rest of the gang at WTMJ-TV!

The word Minneapolis is formed from the Dakota Indian word for water *minera* -- , and the Greek word for city *polis*. The city of water. With 1,000 lakes just in the metro Twin Cities, plus three big rivers. This is where we're having the OD Network's Annual Conference this year, despite my grudge against Calvin Griffiths!

The hearty, early settlers almost 100 of them -- arrived here for the conference on Friday, for a mid day start on the three two-day pre-conferences. Imagine being in an HI Lab with Charlie Seashore and Barbara Brewer! Or Becoming a Better Intervener, Gestalt Style, with John Carter and Co from the Gestalt OSD Center. Or the Intentional Interventions Workshop with Roland Loup and Paul Tolchinsky! They all got started Friday, and are cooking along today, with meetings late into the evenings in some cases.

Today's sessions represent many good friends, and the best thinkers, on an alphabet soup of topics! Jane Watkins leading AI and OD, Otto Kreuger on the MBTI, Alan Drexler and Russ Forrester on the TPM, Jack Phillips on ROI, Dorothy Siminovich and Ann Eron on Gestalt Coaching, and Walt Ross and Foster Mobley on the ISC. (OK, I didn't know what that was, either. It's the Integrated Strategic Change model!)

So, the multitude is assembling, and the energy is building. And the conference is still a day away from actually starting.

There's still time to drop by and register as a walk in we're at the Hilton Towers in Minneapolis and you'll be the center of the OD universe, which will be right here, til Thursday! And, if you can't come by, don't forget that you can sign up for the keynote web casts. Details at <http://www.odnetwork.org/>[www.odnetwork.org](http://www.odnetwork.org)!

As Roland Sullivan has reminded us, this will be the best conference ever!

To: [odnet@lists.odnetwork.org](mailto:odnet@lists.odnetwork.org)

Date: Sunday, November 13, 2005  
Subject: [Odnnet-poc] ODN in Minneapolis -- Day 2

You know you're in Native American country when the first exit out of the Minneapolis airport is for Hiawatha Ave and Minnehaha Ave!

Not unlike today's visitors, the earliest settlers in these parts were drawn by the good food. Except, 10,000 years ago, it was bison and mammoth they were seeking, rather than fajitas and brew pubs. The Dakota were the original settlers here, often in conflict with the Ojibwa or Chippewa over hunting and fishing rights.

The only conflicts visible today were between the morning clouds and the strong west winds which blew out the overnight rain and morning overcast, leaving us a brilliant, sunny day!

The lobby of the Hilton Minneapolis was a cross between a train station and a frat house today. There were people converging from all over the country and, indeed, the world to check in here. And, few of them were strangers. Just sitting here in the lobby has been a study in human networks, seeing who knows whom, who is greeted by whom, who gets a handshake, who gets a hug, who gets an "Oh, My!" and a hug!

There are many more hugs per capita in this population than any other one I know, which give the OD Network conference its feel of a professional gathering \*and\* a college reunion!

Denny Gallagher and Karen James did another wonderful job this year (I think this is the 5th or 6th year!) managing the Dick Beckhard Mentoring Program, to get 42 mentees lined up with 21 mentors for the conference. Michael Broom and Edie Seashore did a session this morning called Back to Basics: The Principles of Powerful Practice that was a huge hit among the mentee population in particular. I had the feeling that the two mentees who chose me but were wishing instead for Michael and Edie!

The OD Network's Annual Meeting took place this afternoon, with a lively discussion of the big increase in the Network's membership, and, budget! We had a first-time experience with "Practice Exchange Networks" this afternoon, which enabled people with various specialized OD interests to organize around topics such as the environment, globalization, change management, etc.

And then at 5:00, we kicked off the Welcome Reception and Learning Showcase.

So, our ranks have swelled (swollen?) and our appetites are wet (wetter?) for the official launch of the conference tomorrow.

There's still time to come by . . . walk ins are welcome! We're on the third floor of the Hilton Towers in Minneapolis, and there's always room for you.

Matt

To: [odnet@lists.odnetwork.org](mailto:odnet@lists.odnetwork.org)  
Date: Monday, November 14, 2005  
Subject: [odnet] ODN in Minneapolis – Day 3

You know you're in the heart of the heartland when you see huge neon signs above Gold Mill Flour and Pillsbury Flour and Grain Beer plants over Nicollet Island here in Minneapolis.

The official theme of this year's OD Network Conference is Advancing the Theory and Practice of OD, and this is about the best place to do that, given who's here for the next three days! You know that people are really into the conference when, for two days, the TV weather folk here have been talking about snow on Tuesday, and yet that word has not been uttered in my hearing among the 800 people and presenters here! The buzz has been all about the conference, and not at all about the weather!

Except for the brutal 8:00 starting time this morning, there was nothing not to love about today. Outgoing chair of the OD Network board, Mila Baker, complimented and thanked Maggie Hoyer for her excellent work this year, and the conference planning committee and staff for all of their hard work. Incoming board chair Christi Olson challenged us to take back our leadership of the field.

Meg Wheatley's opening keynote was titled "Organizations as Living Systems." Using her own photos as visual metaphors, Meg listed the major myths that she sees in organizations: leaders have the answers, high risk requires high control, change starts with the organization chart, people do what they're told, fear is a good motivator, speed equals productivity, action equals progress, and participation is not productive. Meg asserted that the planet would be best off if ours were the species to disappear from the earth; that our presence is what endangers the planet and other species.

Meg cited some stats from Gallup about the US workforce:

- 33% of days lost at work are stress related
- 65% say they do not get recognized for their good work
- 85% have ideas to improve the organization, but only 15% offer them
- 16% are actively dis-engaged from the work
- ~55% are disengaged -- ie, warm chair attrition
- 29% are engaged, but give up after the first 6 months on the job

Meg offered the following solutions: take time to learn together, foster participation, make time for reflection, pursue self awareness.

She noted people who have "walked out" of organizations and "walked in" to real world settings and made a difference. She asked us if we live to work, or if we shouldn't rather work in order to live, and, over a wonderful picture of a giraffe, she asked us where we are willing to stick our necks out?

Finally, Meg asked us to develop a question that we will pursue individually for 3 weeks: what do I choose to be at this time, and then people called out their replies. She was wonderful. Again. As usual. This is the third time that I can remember that Meg has keynoted for ODN, going back to 94 or so in San Francisco. Just wonderful!

The morning concurrent sessions addressed the "Systems Thinking" theme. There were 10 separate sessions, among them Barry Oshry (organizational relationships through a systemic lens), Bill Passmore (HR as a strategic business partner), Brenda Jones (OD vs corporate values), Beth Applegate and Chris Kloth (OD and social change), plus sessions on "Legal Levers for OD," "Ethical Business," an AI case study, the joint strike fighter case study, "OD, Creativity, and Transitions," and "Simple Rules: Organizational DNA."

If you were at last year's conference, you'll remember the fabulous and scary presentation that Mary O'Hara Devereaux made, previewing her future trends book, "The Badlands," which has now come out. Well, she and Glenda Eoyang partnered on this afternoon's keynote called "Far Out and the Way Back: Future Trends, Complexity, and Strategy."

Mary began by saying, "The future is already here. It's just not evenly distributed." The future will not resemble the past, she said. Survival depends on tough choices and luck. She told us to beware of the conventional wisdom -- it is nearly always wrong. And, she identified 5 trend affecting life in the future:

- 1) the reinvention of womanhood -- given demographics and life spans, the future is female
- 2) increasing globalization, which challenges us to deepen our cultural learning
- 3) rapid growth of the network economy, which challenges to design climates and context that support serial, not just episodic, innovation
- 4) China grows, and China grows, and China grows
- 5) the rise of toxic leaders, which challenges us to find and grow new leaders

Glenda cited James Gleick's book Chaos as the first accessible book written about complexity and chaos. She agreed with Mary's emphasis on the feminine perspective, and said that inquiry requires just three questions:

- 1) What? what's going on?
- 2) So what? what does it mean, and why is that important
- 3) Now what? so, where does that take us

Glenda defined complex adaptive systems as agents interacting in patterns, which constrain future actions. She said that problems show up at the systems level, but can only be addressed at the individual level, and that, no matter happens, the consultant is in the middle of the give-get fray. She said that answers are less important than the questions, which should be rich, repeatable, and generalizable, and that change is not a one way street.

(BTW, the webcasts of these and all the keynotes are still available. For details, visit [www.odnetwork.org](http://www.odnetwork.org) )

There were 10 more concurrent sessions this afternoon, including Linda Ackerman (transformational change,) Ed Olson (symbols in org culture,) Saul Eisen (OD for the next 10 years), plus sessions on using OD in poor communities in Nepal, how to make mergers and acquisitions successful, large scale change, and the \*geography\* of change among business, culture, and the future.

Already exhausted, it was time to convene the Men in OD session. We began by missing one of our hearth founders, Stokes Carrigan, who told us last year that he and Diane Carter are moving to Australia/New Zealand to farm sheep. Though Diane has been ill, that's still their goal, and we're deeply missing Stokes at the Men in OD session after all these many years. All the men send healthy wishes to Diane, and best to the both of you, Stokes!

Other Affinity Groups also met during the conference, including the non-profits group, the GLBT group, the Godparents group, Latinos/as in OD, the Global Forum, a pharma/biotech SIG, the new practitioners networking and learning group, the nonprofit affinity group, and the white OD practitioner group.

And then the "evening" meetings began, at area restaurants and bars!

Tomorrow, I'll tell you about the Conference Within a Conference.

Matt

PS: Ed Schein arrived today, and has been around the halls, visiting and talking with everyone. What a treat, to have his knowledge and wisdom and presence among us here. When we met this afternoon, all I could was babble about his culture model and Career Anchors booklet. He was most forgiving of my slobbering!

To: [odnet@lists.odnetwork.org](mailto:odnet@lists.odnetwork.org)  
Date: Tuesday, November 15, 2005  
Subject: [Odnet] ODN in Minneapolis -- Day 4

There is obviously too much good stuff to fit in the few hours a day that we have together!

The day started at 7:00 -- still damned near dark up here! -- for the OD Network's Awards Breakfast. What a treat to have Barbara Bunker, Robin Reid, Ed Shein, Peter Block, and Marv Weisbord all on hand to receive awards this morning!

Barbara Bunker was presented the Lifetime Achievement award by Bob Marshak

Edgar Schein was presented the Lifetime Achievement award by Edie Seashore

Allison Steinkamp Welch was presented the Service to the Network award by Chrissa Merron

Four students won the Student Paper and Presentation Award: Angela Stevens (Benedictine), Kristen Anderson, Steven Gantner, and Tom Hanson (College of St. Catherine)

The new Sharing the Wealth award named in honor Kathie Dannemiller's generous contributions to the network and the field was presented to Roland Loup by Sylvia James, and to Robin Reid by Samantha Lurey

The 2004 Member's Choice Awards for the Most Influential OD books went to:

- o Peter Block for "Flawless Consulting" (1st)
- o Edgar Shein for "Process Consultation (2nd)
- o Marv Weisbord for "Productive Workplaces (3rd) . . . and all were on hand to receive them! There were some great pictures snapped at this event, believe me!

The morning keynote featured Peters Block and Koestenbaum, in a "Conversation on Leadership."

Peter Koestenbaum began by invoking the fundamental differences between Aristotle's empirical view of the world and Plato's rational view of the world. He described two opposite sides of a diamond model as fundamentally different world views. The Personal view emphasizes the predominance of free will and the freedom to experience the consequences of our choices. It is helpful, he said, to understand the intrinsic work of choosing, because it is also the act of choosing to be held accountable.

Peter K's other world view is rooted in von Bertalanffy's Systems view, which transcends cause and effect, in which systems create their own logic and carry on their own lives, hungering for homeostatis (which, he joked is just another supplement you can buy a health food store!)

The four points on his diamond model are: Ethics (our beliefs about life and people, as typically represented in churches), Vision (where we get the big picture, as typically espoused by universities), Courage (deciding to live on the edge, to risk losing our footing momentarily, rather than not taking any risks, which would cause us to lose our

lives, as typically espoused by governments and armies) and Reality (coming to terms with what can not be escaped, as typically espoused by business and enterprise.)

What a mouthful! That's only half of what he said, and that was only half of the morning's keynote!

In the second half, Peter Block graciously and lovingly cited the impact the Peter K, and Marv Weisbord have had on this life and writing. He said his fundamental purpose is to confront people with their own freedom, because, he said, "if I experience my own full freedom, I become accountable for my own behavior, and the results of the whole."

Peter B said he has three core beliefs and practices:

- 1) he always asks the qualifying question of any potential client: "Do you want to create a future that is distinct from the past?" He said that most clients really don't. He said that most clients just want to extend the past into the future, and that they don't need his help to do that. Conversations about costs, productivity, scale, etc have no capacity to create an alternative future, and are indicative of organizations that are happy to extend yesterday into tomorrow.
- 2) he works to get clients to invert cause and effect. He's not sure it's true, but it's a helpful practice to act as if subordinates create their own bosses, inhabitants create the building in which they live or work, etc.
- 3) all interventions occur in community, which is where we experience our connectedness, where public conversations can occur about creating an alternative future, and which are the only answer to the empires and patriarchies of power.

Peter B added three of his own beliefs about organizations:

- 1) the leader's job is to convene the conversations, by getting people into small groups and asking questions that change peoples' view of the future
- 2) change the nature of public conversations, from victimhood to accountability. He said that answers don't have the power to change things, but questions do. "How do I design conversations that have the power to change organizations?"
- 3) you have to have the right unit of change. He cited Margaret Mead, and said that, if people don't work in small groups, nothing will change, and that creation is always a communal act.

Peter B. then laid out his 6 rules for organization and life:

- 1) we need to get out of problem solving and into exploring possibilities
- 2) we need to be expand our understanding of issue ownership, and in particular, our own contribution to the current situation

- 3) we need to promote dissent. Until you say "no," there's no "yes." And saying no is important, because there is no room in empires and colonies run by the powerful for dissent, so we have to make sure that dissent can thrive and flourish
- 4) no barter. Leave your interests at the door. Make a promise to converse with no expectation of return
- 5) look for gifts in this work, and be generous in offering them to others
- 6) invitation -- any important change happens because people are invited to it. The future can not be mandated or structured or imposed by any outside authority.

Such good stuff, from both Peters today!

Leadership was the theme of this morning's concurrent sessions, led by Gene Ruckle, Corey Jamison and Fred Miller, Barry Johnson, Chrissa Merron, John Vogelsang, Ken Jennings, and more! What a dilemma choosing which session!

I didn't, however. I've been participating in a parallel structure called the "Conference Within a Conference." We've been working in Action Learning Teams in the best tradition of Reg Revans! to look at topics related to the OD Network's mission and to develop recommendations to the ED and Board. The three questions had to do with:

- 1) what world views and theory frames do we need to make OD vital in a world of global changes;
- 2) should we be a values based field, or an advocacy based field? and
- 3) if your OD practice is limited to executive coaching, are you really doing OD?

It's been great, especially since it's being organized by good friends and long time colleagues John Adams, Peter Norlin, Marilyn Blair, Bev Scott, and Denny Gallagher, and Nick Mann.

There were two additional keynotes this afternoon. Mila Baker hosted a panel of managers talking about their experience of Bottom Line OD. And, a late addition to the schedule was a keynote with Paulette Bickham, chief of pharmacy at Pendleton Methodist Memorial Hospital in New Orleans, on Learning from Hurricane Katrina. (Yesterday another session was added, with Katherine Curran, who was one of the America Speaks facilitators this past week on the new Orleans recovery summit. Several people who attended her session said that her message brought tears to many . . . )

The afternoon theme sessions extended the bottom line theme, with Jeremy and Samantha Lurey, Therese Yaeger and Peter Sorensen, Bev Scott, and several other very interesting models and case studies.

Feeling weary yet wired, the evening reception with “Purple Rain” made no demands on anyone except the bartenders!

We close the conference officially tomorrow, but then we’re still not done. Stay tuned!

Matt

PS: I forgot to mention that this Sunday, we had the 20th convening of the People of Color affinity group. That's such a great tradition, and I understand that they did some good and important work there.

PPS: It's been snizzling here -- a combination of snow and drizzle here this evening, and no one seems to be going crazy!

PPPS: The Hilton Towers here in Minneapolis is in the heart of the theatre and retail district. The BIG tenant here is Target, which has a HUGE two floor downtown store and their 35 story corporate headquarters, with lights that change color at night! They also sponsor the Target Center sports arena.

Two blocks away, on Hennepin Avenue, is the theatre district, which includes the fabulously restored State Theatre, the Orpheum, and the Pantages, made famous, I think, by Ricki Lee Jones. A few blocks north east, toward the Mississippi, is the stately Masonic Building 10 stories of stone construction built in 1888. A few blocks further is the Hennepin Avenue bridge, the site of the first bridge to cross the Mississippi here in 1855.

And, we’re about two blocks from the University of St. Thomas, which is where Peter Vail used to teach . . . and about a mile from De La Salle University

To: [odnet@lists.odnetwork.org](mailto:odnet@lists.odnetwork.org)  
Date: Wednesday, November 16, 2005  
Subject: [Odnet] ODN in Minneapolis -- Day 5

It was a struggle to crawl out of bed this morning.

A snowstorm blew through town last night, leaving an inch or two of snow on the ground. By dawn's early light, though, it was banished by big, blustery winds that cleared the cobwebs out of the sky, and, my head, making room for the light that would become today.

So, is there any reason to be exhausted today? Well, it's been 5 days, 800 souls, 40 concurrent sessions, 4 keynotes already, and we’re still not done! I skipped the “Coffee with the Authors” this morning, hitting the hotel’s exercise facility instead. I also needed to prepare for the session that Paula Yardley Griffin and I co-lead this morning, called

“OD at Work: Continuing the Conversation.” You may recall that, two years ago, we had a huge online conversation on The Meta Network’s Caucus conference with Meg Wheatley and Bob Tannenbaum (the last “work” he did before he died), to discuss the field of OD and how we do our work. Paula and Kris Quade whittled those transcripts down to a wonderful book called, you guessed it “OD at Work.” She and I used the World Café methodology to continue the work that the online conference began.

Presenting this morning, however, meant that I had to miss other concurrent sessions with Heather Berthoud (OD and courage,) John Bennett (coaching), David Jamieson (what makes OD be OD), Michael Welp (conflict narratives) and several others, plus the Conference Within a Conference, which I wrote about yesterday.

The conference’s closing keynote was on Identifying and Utilizing Social Networks, by Karen Stephenson, who teaches at Harvard’s Graduate School of Design. She says that networks are stores of trust-based knowledge, and showed us maps of the business network, the social network, and the career advice networks of one organization, highlighting the differences among them. She showed us the network diagram of Enron, and joked that "fraud is just innovation taken too far . . . I want to stimulate the innovation, but use the values of the organization to keep it from getting as far as fraud."

She has a 3 Ds model for her work -- detect, diagnose, and design. She described the next wave of organizational forms as heterarchical, which she described as organizational silos as we would recognize them, but linked through network (stores of trust-based knowledge.)

Karen said that, when you're in an organization, you really do know everything, but because you're in the middle of it, you can't see it. She said that outside perspective is necessary to "see" what's hidden in plain sight in the organization. She said that human networks are the autonomous nervous systems or organizations; they operate, and we take them for granted. In response to a question from the one of the web cast participants, Karen said that, in order to discover who trusts whom, ask questions like, "who do you go to find out critical information about the organization? And, who do you go to when you have a hot new idea?"

And it wasn’t even lunch time yet!

This afternoon, Lisa Kimball, Executive Producer at Group Jazz, and a newly elected OD Network board member, took a bus load of folks to the Mayo Clinic, to discuss how complexity sciences apply to their medical and organizational challenges.

The Conference Within a Conference finished up today, with commitments to type of flip charts, continue conversations electronically, and present the results to Maggie Hoyer, ED of the OD Network, and to the board.

And, in a strange, ironic shift, as most people were in “ending” mode this afternoon, about a hundred more were just beginning their post conference intensives. And what a

great lineup this was, too! Sandra Janoff and Marv Weisbord on Future Search, a global network of OD people to reconcile American vs European business models, faculty from the Coaches Training Institute, and two folks from the Hay Group on using measures to drive results.

So, it was a day full of great content, long goodbyes, exchanged cards, squeezes and hugs, shared cab rides, and commitments to keep in touch.

A few final thoughts in tomorrow's message. Matt

To: [odnet@lists.odnetwork.org](mailto:odnet@lists.odnetwork.org)  
Date: Thursday, November 17, 2005  
Subject: [Odnnet] ODN in Minneapolis -- Day 6

Ya gotta love a state where the university's teams are called the Gophers! (And I thought it was weird rooting for my Maryland Terrapins!)

Not too long ago, the "diversity" of the Twin Cities was a function of whether you came from Finland, Norway, Denmark, or Sweden. Today, however, there are growing and vibrant Hispanic, Middle Eastern, and African American communities, and great restaurants, too. This ain't your father's Minnesota any more!

I worked my way through college in the hotel business (and then promptly got out!), so I know what empty ball rooms and stacked chairs and rolled tables are about.

Still, it's strange to stand in these rooms today rooms that have embraced and encouraged such important conversation for our field, and for the OD Network. Some of these rooms are empty now; they're also cold with AC blowing and no bodies or lights for warmth.

Several of these rooms are now busy with other meetings; somehow, they seem to be interloping in "our" space . . . unaware of what's just happened in these halls and walls. Unaware of how much humanity was here. Unaware of how much human contact occurred. Unaware of the learning and knowledge that was exchanged. Unaware that 800 people fanned a spark of interest into a flame of energy that rose and expanded throughout and beyond this space, that would pursue us all into the recesses of our ongoing lives.

Of course, these events only happen with a huge amount of blood, sweat, and tears. This year's conference planning committee deserves a huge acknowledgement and thank you! Gordon Brooks, Karen James, Matt Griffin, John McCall, Kristine Quade, Soraya Sesto, and Wendy Suter, who was the conference chair. They worked closely with the conference Advisory Board: Michael Broom, Barbara Bunker, Lisa Kimball, Jo Sanzgiri, Edie Seashore, and Chris Worley.

