

**Matt Minahan's Blog**  
**OD Network 2010 Annual Conference in New Orleans**  
**October 16-20, 2010**

Date - Sat Oct 16 23:09:14 2010

From: Matt Minahan, MM & Associates <matthew@minahangroup.com>

Subject: [Odnet] OD Network 2010 in NOLA -- Day 1

So, this conference has been a long time a-borning . . . but it's about the jump out of its box and into the real world.

What a great place for such a thing. The conference theme is: Recovery, Revitalization, Response: Exploring the Dynamics of Change.

Folks have been gathering for the conference for the past few days, taking in a few of the pre conference workshops, and taking in some of the bitter and the sweet of this wondrous town, New Orleans, Louisiana.

Most of our preconference touring has included a walking tour of the Garden District, including the homes of author Ann Rice, John Goodman, Sandra Bullock, and Hale and Lindy Boggs (the family home of Cokie Roberts), and of course, NOLA's famous Brennan family restaurant, Commander's Palace. What a wonderful mix of antebellum architecture, more recent homes, color, design, and personal preference, all around, and just off the city's first planned cemetery, which we also toured . . . it is now "home" of Judge Ferguson, who was the deciding half of the "separate but equal" court ruling from 1896 that we know as Plessy versus Ferguson and which was the law of the land until the Brown versus Topeka Board of Education case in 1954.

That evening, we went down to Frenchman's Street, at the far end of the French Quarter from the Marriott hotel on Canal Street. We asked two waiters and one concierge where we could find good music, and all three said to get to Frenchman's Street and to visit Snug Harbor, the Spotted Cat, and DBA.

What a great night of music! A 6 piece rock 'n' blues Band at DBA, a 4 piece combo in front of Ms. Sophie Lee at The Spotted Cat, and an 81 year old guitar player at Snug Harbor. No cover charges; a one drink minimum in some cases, no tables just space to stand up in front of the band, sometimes some CDs for sale, and -- always -- a bucket for tips out in front of the musicians.

The weather has been a warm 80-82, with a bright sun in a cloudless sky and very low humidity.

On the way back to the hotel for a board meeting this afternoon, we stopped in at Cafe Dumonde -- [www.cafedumonde.com/](http://www.cafedumonde.com/) for a round of beignets, well worth the time and calories: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/\\*Beignet\\*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/*Beignet*)



Politics, and Influence," with NTL members Mee-Yan Cheung Judge and Bob Marshak. And there were "Six Conversations That Matter," presented by Bill Brewer of Designed Learning. The People of Color held a caucus all day Saturday as they traditionally do, this year convened by Kenneth Jones, John Perry, and Forrest Story, and the leaders of the regional OD Networks met to talk about collaborating and partnerships. I didn't make any of these workshops, but the buzz is still around the place from those who did.

This morning began with the orientation for first time conference attendees, with almost 100 people in attendance. At the same time, at the OD Network's Annual Business Meeting, Peter Norlin, the OD Network's Executive Director, enumerated many of the Network's exciting efforts to build strategic relationships with other related organizations and efforts to build membership. Board Chair June Delano noted that most non profits have been suffering over the last three years, and that the Network was able to hold its own financially and at the conference. But this year, Network membership is down, investment incomes are down, the staff is now down to three, they've have pared expenses down to the bone. She encouraged members to recruit 3 new members, to contribute to the Stewards Circle, and to help promote the Network. Darya Funches, who is the incoming chair of the Network's Board, announced a new strategy development process which is starting here at the conference, to sharpen up the Network's value proposition, to involve a diverse range of practitioners, both invited and volunteers. There were several former board members in the room, and it was wonderful to have their presence and support for the Network.

I got to work again this year with Stephanie Jo Gomez in convening the Dick Beckhard Mentoring Session, where we had about 40 mentors and approximately 70 mentees work through a speed dating process and get launched into the conference. Quite a buzz, and a lot of relationships off to a very good start! Around the corner from our session was the Networking Forward Program with Arthur Lerner and Deborah Peluso.

The conference officially opened after lunch with keynoter Jean Houston.

She is a truly amazing human being, with a vision that reaches beyond the farthest horizons. ([www.jeanhouston.com](http://www.jeanhouston.com)) She said that in our time, we are the people of the parentheses, living at the end of the one era, but not quite at the moment of the new era. She said that our maps no longer match the territory, in the most radical times of deconstruction and reconstruction that the world has ever seen. In these days we are having between 5 and 100 times more experiences than our ancestors of just 100 years ago had.

Speaking of New Orleans, she said that where there is crisis, there is also great opportunity, and that we are guests at a wake which will lead to a great rebirth, a cross roads between two worlds. She said that we are both the pilgrims of the journey, and also the parents of the future, which puts us in a position to make a profound difference in the world and the future. She said that as change agents, we are de facto at the margin of systems, but that that's where the change happens, and to embrace our marginality.

She talked about "jump time," which I think is a concept from one of her 26 books. She said that jump time allows for a new order and the repatterning of the human nature. She said that the most important breakthrough she has seen is the rise of women into a full partnership with men.

Ms. Houston said that there is a deep wisdom in the indigenous cultures which connects into our social cultures today. She invited her business associate, Ms. Connie Buffalo, a native American, to come to

the stage. In a quiet but commanding presence, Connie said that humans are heirs to an extraordinary evolutionary process, but we're also conscious heirs and actors, who can shape the future for the first time in history. She said that this is the time that the ancient prophecies are coming to pass, and that we are at a choice point, deciding whether we are going to walk a path of individuality that affects just each of us alone, or a path that will intentionally be better for all of us. We sit and stand now with all of our ancestors who have preceded us, and that the decisions that we face can not be just about our own job security, but must be about the betterment of the world.

What a powerful message for people who work on change! And that got our conference of to a great start. There were three Strategic Practitioner sessions in mid afternoon. Bob Marshak's session was "Theories of Practice: Yours, Mine, Ours," inviting practitioners to discover their own filters and some new ideas for their theories of practice. Jeff Frakes and Ruth House led a session called "Showing Our Value: How Do We Demonstrate the Impact of Our Work," about measuring and demonstrating the impact of our work. The third session was some case studies and examples of how large group methods have worked out, with a great lineup of presenters, including Billie Alban, Barbara Bunker, NTL members Amber Mayes and Sukari Pinnock, among others.

After the opening reception -- which was lovely, held right in the middle of all of the sponsors' tables -- the evening session was a powerful, heartwarming, and very uplifting discussion of some of the ways that the community responded to Katrina, and some of the amazing things that have happened here since: "NOLA in the Aftermath: Emerging Leadership, Resiliency, and Responsiveness," with Dan Shea, the managing editor of the Times Picayune and Jamie Hauser, Sr. VP of Women's Hospital in Baton Rouge.

And, while we were busy at it indoors, it was a lovely 78 outside again here.

The first official day of the conference is in the books. We're teed up for day two. See you tomorrow.

Matt

PS: In the NFL, Washington \*almost\* beat the Colts this night . . . but couldn't pull it off . . . the only downer in a great day. The locals here are thrilled because the Saints roughed up the Buccaneers, 31 to 6 . . .

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Date: Mon Oct 18 23:04:05 2010  
From: Matt Minahan, MM & Associates <matthew@minahangroup.com>  
Subject: [Odnet] OD Network 2010 in NOLA -- Day 3

After a week in NOLA, this morning brought the first hint of clouds, but they make the city look different from the way it does under the brilliance of sun. And, this cloudiness is quite likeable.

After a morning focus group on the topic of OD and HR over breakfast by OD Practitioner editor John Vogelsang, the plenary began with a rousing start from a "second line" -- [www.mardigrasdigest.com/Sec\\_2ndline\\_history.htm](http://www.mardigrasdigest.com/Sec_2ndline_history.htm) <[http://www.mardigrasdigest.com/Sec\\_2ndline\\_history.htm](http://www.mardigrasdigest.com/Sec_2ndline_history.htm)> -- about a dozen people with costumes and hats and beads and umbrellas and masks dancing through the hall to a dixieland version of "When the Saints Go Marching In."

The morning keynote speaker was David Rock, who coined the term "Neuroleadership" and co-founded the Neuroleadership Institute, a worldwide effort to bring neuroscientists together with leadership experts. [www.neuroleadership.org](http://www.neuroleadership.org) <<http://www.neuroleadership.org>> His books include "Your Brain at Work" and "Coaching with the Brain in Mind."

He began with two magazine ads from the 1950s, one advocating serving cola drinks to newborns, and the other showing doctors endorsing the benefits of smoking, after which he wondered aloud how much of what we believe about leaders and organizations today will we reject 40 years into the future just as surely as we have rejected smoking by doctors and cola drinks for infants.

He showed us a graph of technical skills going down as people climb up through the organization from line manager to middle manager to enterprise leader. Simultaneously, the need for self and social awareness goes up as the jobs increase in size. But the bad news is that our capacity for self and social awareness appears to go down as we age, according to the research. So, the need for the most self and social awareness in our work lives occurs at just the times when our capacity for it goes down the farthest and the fastest.

Brain research highlights what we need to do more of. For instance, there is actually a reason why taking a walk when we're confronting a work challenge is the most helpful way to solve the problem. It also helps explain things we don't know, such as why it is far better to learn in an hour a week than it is to learn for 8 hours in a day.

He shared his model of the four faces of insight: awareness, reflection, insight, action. On the third phase, insight, there is a burst of dopamine in the brain when the insight occurs, which changes the brain and the way it works. That's one of the reasons that change agents who can bring insights to clients are really popular . . . because it's not about the problem solving, but the insight moment that provides the energy and vitality to make change happen.

Speaking to the second phase, reflection, Rock said that reflection can only happen when there is quiet, such as when we're waking up or going to sleep. He showed us a map of the electrical signals in the brain pointing out that anxiety increases the electrical activity in the brain to a very high level that prevents the brain from getting to the quiet needed for reflection, which is required for insight to occur. Also, alpha (good) brain waves can only arise when external stimuli are tuned out and quiet can be achieved, and he showed us a graph with alpha brain waves peaking just 1 second before an insight occurs, and another that shows that a small amount of stress anxiety reduces alpha brain waves and diminishes insights . . . stress such as working on a deadline, or working with a group, or even getting noticed for your performance, which, paradoxically, adds more pressure and reduces alpha brain waves. He said that reflection requires positive thinking, and happens best when we're not trying to solve problems.

His final point was that social pain is equivalent to physical pain, stimulating the same regions in the brain, and in studies, the administration of a Tylenol to address the physical pain of an injury actually makes the social pain less severe. He said that in our brain, our response to bad is stronger than good, is longer lasting, and takes more energy to supplant. If your brain can't decide if something is good or bad, your brain decides that it is bad, in fact, very bad, which makes it even harder to overcome. (Sidenote, I'm wondering if that might be a factor in the current feelings about President Obama. He certainly is \*quite\* different from any one in that job previously, and I'm wondering if our brains and biology like this aren't playing a role in all of this. Hard to imagine that they're not, eh?)

So our job as change agents is to avoid moments that people perceive as a status threat, because once threatened, people become highly reactive and temporarily turn into crazy persons because they fear that they are being attacked in a very primal way.

He explained the SCARF model, which he uses to understand our responses to stimuli -- Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness, and Fairness.

Uncertainty arouses the limbic system of the brain and stimulates our fear and fight/flight responses. A feeling of having a choice, or autonomy dramatically impact and reduces stress levels, because the brain likes to be able to predict and have a say in the future. Relatedness is about choosing people as friend or foe, whom you can trust or distrust, with whom you should connect or not connect. And for the brain, foe is the default choice, causing us to think that people are the enemy until proven otherwise, and that causes us to not listen to them and not be able to collaborate with them

So, we want to minimize or offset SCARFS. When you're going to stimulate one of these domains, Rock advised that we balance it with an increase in another one.

Resources for more on David Rock:

[Davidrock.net](http://Davidrock.net)

Psychologytoday.com/blog/your-brain\_work

Books: Quiet Leadership, Your Brain at Work.

Davidrock101 on Twitter, where he posts his insights.

There were lots of other interesting and cool sessions today. I was in the “So, You Want to Be an Author” session at mid day. This is a session that the former OD Practitioner editor, Dr. Marilyn Blair, started a few years back and her successor, Dr. John Vogelsang, is carrying on. I got to speak as an OD Practitioner contributor and author, and as an editor for Seasonings, our e-zine for reflection on our lives and practices from a certain age and stage of life.

But I want to focus on the Men in OD session this evening. I’ve been convening these sessions since 1995 and sometimes we have 10-12 men, and sometimes we have 2-3 men. Today, it was David Glaser, my close friend and list servant of our ODNet-mindfulness list, and one young man who is a grad student and father of two. As you might expect, we’re in very different life and career stages, and yet the conversation seemed like it was balm and enlightenment not just for the young man there, but also for David and me. Every time I think about skipping a year for this session, we have a conversation like the one this evening, and I leave more convinced than ever that Harrison Owen’s rule about open space “whoever is there is the right people” is more true than ever.

There was a ton of other stuff today and tonight, including a meeting of the GLBT affinity group, a reception for AU/NTL students, grads, and faculty, and a recognition reception for those who’ve worked on the conference sponsored by the OD Network.

Lots more to write about today, too, but it’s way late, and I’m zonked.

More tomorrow, if I can manage it!

Sleep well. I know I will.

Matt

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Date: Tue, 19 Oct 2010 22:09:15 -0400  
From: Matt Minahan, MM & Associates <matthew@minahangroup.com>  
Subject: [Odnet] OD Network 2010 in NOLA – Day 4

As the end of the conference approaches, more and more are \*talking\* about getting out of the hotel and into the surrounding neighborhoods and French Quarter here in New Orleans, but, frankly, I don't see people leaving the hotel; the sessions have been so rich and revitalizing that I think people are really torn between staying inside versus going outside into the real world . . . and staying inside has been winning . . .until tonight.

This morning began with the OD Network's awards breakfast. What a sweet way for the Network to honor the contributions and achievements of members! There were two Lifetime Achievement Awards, presented to Edwin Nevis, one of the founders of the Gestalt Institute of Cleveland, and Dick Axelrod, consultant, author, developer of The Conference Model, and all around good guy!

The Network has changed the name of the Service to the Network Award to the "Service to the Network Award in Honor of Frederick A. Miller," in honor of, well, Fred Miller! This year's recipients were Laurie Reuben and Sharon Leider, both of whom were volunteer coordinators at our conferences for the past 5 years.

The Outstanding Global Work Award was presented to Patricia Arenas for her lifelong commitment to empowerment of people in Cuba, especially those who are poor and repressed.

The Outstanding Article in the ODP in 2009 was written by Bauback Yeganeh and David Kolb for their article called Mindfulness and Experiential Learning.

The Outstanding Regional Network award was presented to the Dallas/Ft Worth OD Network.

The Student Paper awards went to Yaron Prywes, a student at Teachers College of Columbia University, Shirley Mayton of Fielding, and Rodney Mayer of University College, University of Maryland.

The buffet was yummy, but the speeches, and awards, and the sense of humility at receiving their honors was what most striking for me. There must been have 5 speakers who got close to tears as they reflected on their lives, their work, and even their fathers.

We hustled off to the plenary room to hear the extraordinary Garth Fagan. Garth Fagan brings together two careers that are seldom found in one person. He won the Tony, the Olivier, and the Astaire awards for his dance and choreography, especially for choreographing The Lion King. He is the founder, artistic director, and president of Garth Fagan Dance, which is celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Given his roles in leadership positions, he has developed a unique perspective on arts leadership, and how to cultivate creativity, find and mentor good colleagues, and how to navigate the challenges of leadership.

Fagan spoke of his need for a mature and meaningful relationship with his father, how important to him his father's approval was, and how, even despite his father's early death at 59, he still consults his father on a daily basis and on all of the big decisions in his life.

He said that a key element in dance is about surprise, which sometimes requires breaking the rules. About breaking the rule, Fagan said that this is good, but it would be really nice if you know what the rules are that you are breaking. It doesn't work to just go out to see who is the most outrageous. But our goal should not be to be outrageous. He said that you have to understand the cathedral before you tear it down and there is immense freedom that occurs in any discipline.

Fagan said that you see the hootchie koo and hot bods on stage, but life is full of tenderness, and our dance and art needs to reflect that.

He showed us two videos: In the first one, 6 very slinky people dressed in neon colored tights performed an award winning modern dance that had us all on the edge of our seats. He also showed some video clips from The Lion King, which he choreographed, which were visually and conceptually stunning.

He said that he loves the current TV dance shows, but that they are using the very small, and old, frame of ballroom dancing, and that is much too limiting, leaving out the new and more interesting forms and styles of dancing.

He said "I am there for my dancers 24/7. I must be present to them fully when they walk in the studio, so that they can deal with the madness." He told us the story of a dancer who came in quite distraught because her cat had died, and that she doubted she could dance that evening. Fagan listened to her, and comforted her, and then said, "If there is a cat heaven, and your cat is there, your cat would want you to be a dancer and be in tonight's performance," which saved the day, and persuaded the dancer to get to work.

For me, the day almost ended with the Research Paper Colloquium, in which we had 4 graduate students present their papers, judged among the best in the batch this year. We'll have another, similar session tomorrow, with three more winning authors.

However, the end of day may be the highlight of the whole thing. At the evening reception, fellow OD Network Board Member and friend Andrew Bennett performed magic for us, and shared some of the corny tricks and jokes that his grandfather taught him when he was 12, when the family lived here in New Orleans. He had us laughing and wondering, "How'd he \*do\* that?!"

So, that's the story from Day 4 here in NOLA.

If you're here and have something to add, please write and share it.

Otherwise, more tomorrow. G'night, Crescent City. Matt

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Date: Thu, 21 Oct 2010 00:02:27 -0400  
From: "Matt Minahan, MM & Associates" <matthew@minahangroup.com>  
Subject: [Odnet] OD Network 2010 in NOLA -- Day 5

The last day of the OD Network conference is always a bit enigmatic. Every year, the day is thematic and integrative, the source of the best awarenesses and insights that occur from bringing together all of the themes and major elements of the conference. But the day is always bittersweet, with the knowledge that this social system we've constructed so carefully for the past three days will be evaporating within a few hours.

So, the morning breakfast room on Wednesday is always full of hugs, cards exchanged, email promised, new relationships sealed, old relationships caught up, and promises to stay in touch. Most of which get kept, in my experience.

Stephanie Jo Gomez and I had an early morning breakfast meeting with the participants in the Mentor/Mentee program to debrief their experience with the program, and we got some great ideas and suggestions for next year. And after that, Jim Maddox from Friends University, David Jamieson from St. Thomas, and I convened the second session of the Student Research Colloquium, featuring two of our award winning research papers. The two students stood up in front of a circle full of academics and professionals and presented their research questions, major research principles, methodologies, findings, implications for future research, and how the work has impacted them personally. Their work was solid, well grounded, done to very high academic standards, and speaks both to the great work being done in our OD programs and also to a very bright future for our field.

In the closing plenary, fellow OD Network Board member and magician Andrew Bennett began the session by acknowledging his deep love, respect and appreciation for Peter Norlin and his work as the Executive Director of the OD Network. The room erupted in applause and then a standing ovation for Peter.

Closing keynoter Chris Rabb began by noting that he has an MSOD from Penn, and how glad he was to speaking to a room full of people who get the concepts and speak the same language. He said that this was the first audience where he didn't have to explain what OD and change are, and where there is nothing derisive or bad about any of it. He said, "This \*is\* a community, because there are shared values and goals that you all hold together."

He said that you can't be an entrepreneur without being both innovative and creative. Building another Wendy's is being commercial, but not entrepreneurial.

He showed us some art -- a picture of a 5 dollar bill, but with Abraham Lincoln with very large and outsized afro hair, and discussed the value of the art being determined by the context in which is discovered. If you discovered this art in someone's home or in a gallery, it has a high monetary value. But if your cousin Ray-Ray showed up with a copy inside his coat and looking very purloined, it is probably only worth \$5 or %10.

Rabb showed us some fascinating statistics. In a chart showing percentages of households with business equity: 14% of US households own their own business or more property than just their own homes. For whites, it is 16%. For those with a college degree, it is 21%. For those with professional or managerial experience, it is 25%, and for those who are in the top 10% of income earners, it is 41%.

Rabb shared a slide with data showing that, on average, middle income whites earn more than high income blacks. And that high income whites earn many, many times more than high income blacks.

He borrowed a phrase from Dwight Eisenhower in discussing what he called The Entrepreneurial Industrial complex, where entrepreneurs are driven by ideology, and industry is driven by habit.

Citing his experience working on the White House Conference on Small Business and on Capitol Hill, he raised the question of who has influence and how they get it. He noted that over \$100M per year is spent on Capitol Hill by a combination of the US Chamber of Commerce, the Business Roundtable, and National Federation of Independent Business. He said that the next largest national business related groups contribute less than \$1M per year.

Rabb cited his grandfather, saying, "It is OK to \*be\* ignorant, but it is not OK to \*stay\* ignorant."

Rabb said that the top predictors of business success are: access to sufficient entrepreneurial startup capital, having a formal education, having prior work experience in a relevant field, choosing the right industry, and having prior work experience in a family owned business, and not necessarily \*your\* family, but \*any\* family. (From Race & Entrepreneurial Success: Black, White, and Asian, which Rabb co-authored.)

Rabb said that there are three kinds of invisible capital: human, which is about knowledge, experience, and skill; social, which is who you know and who knows you and what they think about you; and cultural capital -- the differing languages and experiences that we have in our individual cultures. As an explanation of cultural capital, Rabb told a story about his grandfather, an entrepreneur, in the middle of a business transaction, who took off his hat, and for the first time, the client realized that he was dealing with a black man once he saw the man's hair. And they never did business again

Rabb showed us a chart noting underrepresented groups in business: women make up 51% of the population, but they make up only 28% of people in business; Latinos make up 15% of the population, but they make up only 8% of people in business; African Americans make up 13% of the population, but only 7% of people in business.

More shockingly, he said that only 1 in 20 black owned businesses employs one person or more. So, how much wealth can you create for yourself, your family, and your community, when you're working on such a small scale?

Women run businesses earn on average of \$ 1.1M per year; men run businesses earn on average \$2.5M per year.

So, what to do? First, build your entrepreneurial literacy; build capacity, and consider the kinds of assets that you're talking about. Are these community assets where the wealth accrues to more than one person, or is it about personal wealth building?

Rabb's book, Invisible Capital, contains these same themes, and more, and was included in our conference bags, so there will several hundred more copies in circulation as a result of that very generous idea.

The closing moments of the conference were filled with New Orleans music, played and sung by a musician, with lots of clapping and stomping and waving goodbye til next year.

So, that's the story, so far anyway.

I'll share a bit more color and some pieces about the local scene tomorrow.

Matt

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Date: Fri, 22 Oct 2010 23:31:47 -0400  
From: Matt Minahan, MM & Associates <matthew@minahangroup.com>  
Subject: [Odnet] OD Network 2010 in NOLA -- Day 6

There is a full moon in a crystal clear sky rising over the Mississippi as I write this on Friday evening. The sleepy, powerful, unpredictable body of water that courses through the heartland of the country and serves as the commercial spine of the land and the master of this city on its banks.

Everything about New Orleans is defined in reference to the river. In fact the city's nickname, The Crescent City, comes from the shape of the land formed by the snake-like bend of the river which leaves the land in the form of a crescent.

Ever present around the city is the fleur de lis . . . a remnant of the French history in NOLA. It is the logo of stores, hotels, taxi companies, and even the Saints. One of the cool things about this town is the creativity with which it expresses itself. I saw a t shirt that said "I [symbol of a fleur de lis] NOLA," a clear take off on "I [heart] NY." There are signs all over town that say "Geaux Saints." Ingenious.

On a personal note, I was on the planning team for our conference the first time we came to New Orleans, in 1998. We were right across Canal Street from this year's Marriott in the Sheraton. And this is the first time that I've been back. The city is so different, in many, many ways . . . More on NOLA in a moment . . .

After the hordes have left a typical OD Network conference on Wednesday, there are always a few dozen stalwarts around who are presenting or attending post conference workshops, and this year was no exception. Fewer workshops this year and smaller groups, but a lively and hearty crowd, hanging on for the pearls of wisdom and learning.

So, stepping back a moment, what's it all about, Alfie?

This was an important moment for the Network, for the field, and for ourselves this week. This is a year that included NTL's New OD conference, where social constructionism and dialogue and Appreciative Inquiry were the centerpieces. Then the Global OD conference in Budapest, bringing together several hundred people from all around the world to talk about the core principles and values of OD and how they are practiced across distance and cultures. NTL's Annual Member Meeting this August focused on neuroscience and how the biology of the brain makes a difference in how we see and approach the world and our social systems.

The OD Network conference in NOLA seemed to bring all of those themes together. Jean Houston's energy and passion and belief in our field and the future of humanity and the world. David Rock's view from down under that the pathways and circuitry of the brain are central to what we do and how we do it in the world. Garth Fagan touched on art, and the pivotal role that art and dance play in the world

and in our lives, and he did it by showing us beautiful dance. And Chris Rabb brought some real world data about race, class, and gender to bear on entrepreneurship.

These are the conversations that shape our field today, and I think that this conference did a masterful job of picking these themes and providing us with exemplars and scholars to challenge our thinking and stretch the envelope for us and the field.

To say nothing of the fabulous array for pre-, post-, and within-conference workshops. I didn't count them all, but I'm betting there were something like 75 or 100 different sessions in the conference, and that's a huge enterprise to plan, launch and deliver.

The biggest kudos go the staff and leadership of the OD Network -- Executive Director Peter Norlin, Director of Finance and Operations Nick Corne, Coordinator of Events and Operations Joselisa Cerda, and Conference Manager, Linda Sherman. (It was a real treat to stumble up the hotel escalator to find Linda Sherman, who directed me to the conference registration window and to be greeted warmly by Joselisa and the crack team of volunteers.)

What few realize is that the planning for an event like this begins about a year in advance. And many of the planners serve for two or three years on the planning team. That's a huge commitment, and a huge contribution to the Network. Anita Bhasin, Anne Litwin, Becky Ripley, Candido Trujillo, Kittie Watson, Lorri Johnson, Marcella Benson-Quaziana, Michael Arena, Nas I. Afi, Roxanne Butler, Srik Gopalakrishnan, and Wendy Fraser. Thanks from all of us for your time, commitment, and great work that you did on this year's program.

And, then there are the presenters. Maybe 125 or 150 of the smartest people in our field, who have planned, designed, prepped, sweated, and ultimately, shared their theories, knowledge, case studies, and ideas with their colleagues. When people talk about a good conference, they talk about the hard choices among excellent concurrent sessions at the same time, and there was a lot of good complaining about that here this week.

Finally, a word about the city. My wife and some friends came down a few days early to spend some time in this most complex city before we got hermetically sealed in the Marriott for the conference. We had a walking tour of Lafayette Cemetery #1 and the Garden District, where we saw the homes of Sandra Bullock and John Goodman, which just happen to be right across the street from one another. Later we saw the home of Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt. We took a "Katrina" tour, which showed us three different neighborhoods which were flooded, with no sign of damage in the most affluent neighborhood, still some signs of damage in a middle class neighborhood, and almost no signs of rebuilding in the poorest, the lower 9th ward.

We spent an evening on Frenchman's Street listening to jazz guitarist Warren Battiste at Snug Harbor, and Miss Sophie Lee at the Spotted Cat. Man, there is something about this great jazz music, live, in a herd of people shoulder to shoulder near the bar that is just unmatched.

As we walked along Royale Street, we could barely contain ourselves in the art stores, with all kinds of watercolors, oils, prints, and photos from a wide range of schools and styles. We spent a day in the Sculpture Garden with the most interesting array of forms and styles, and then inside the New Orleans Museum of Art, with some real art by Renoir, Monet, Degas and many many more.

We spent an evening on the S. S. Natchez, cruising the Mississippi at sunset and listening to the wonderful Dukes of Dixieland, playing continuously since 1949. And, at Cafe DuMonde we shared cafe au lait and their French style beignets.

And yet, there were still a thousand things to do, and a thousand places to go that we never go to.

Wherever we went, we were always within range of what is maybe New Orleans' greatest community resource, WWOZ-FM. The public radio station, right in the heart of the French Quarter, is a national treasure, playing all kinds of jazz all day and night long. Free form radio. No play lists. Program hosts who bring you their music and their artists and their stories and their songs. I've been listening to the Great Oz for years, via the magic of the internet at [www.wwoz.org](http://www.wwoz.org), which is New Orleans' gift to the rest of us. Sharing their radio station with the rest of the world.

Do you have any idea what an asset a jazz station is to a community? I don't mean the smooth jazz commercial stations. I'm talking about true, non commercial stations down at the far left of the FM dial -- non profit, no commercials, free djs, wide ranging music. These days, that's such a rarity and needs to be acknowledged and not taken for granted. The Great Oz stands right beside the best in the business, the original KJAZ, and now KCVM in San Francisco, KKJZ in Long Beach, KJZZ in Phoenix, WBGO in Newark, KPLU in Seattle, KSDS in San Diego, KUVU in Denver, WKHR in Cleveland, and the Pacifica stations in New York, Seattle, San Francisco, and DC.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention NOLA's NPR affiliate, the great WWNO, and there is a wonderful student-run station from Tulane at WTUL.

I firmly believe that it was the gritty and persistent presence of these non commercial stations in New Orleans and the tenacious staff and management of the New Orleans Times-Picayune that kept the heart and soul of the city alive in the worst of the flooding, passing along news about people and families and services and conditions in the rest of the city. THIS is what the public airwaves were meant to do for America. Public assets, available for free, for the service of the public, not the bottom line. For the service of the country, not corporations. For the service of democracy and citizenship, not the wealth of shareholders. And, at that most troubling of times, it was the non commercial, public stations -- the ones with small signals, no budgets, and old equipment -- that supported this community in its hours and days and weeks and months of need.

Everyone one you talk with -- cabbies, wait staff, hotel clerks, bus drivers -- everyone here has a story to tell about what happened to them in Katrina. The scars are deep. Everyone lost someone. Many times, more. The loss is still incalculable. It has been a privilege to be here to witness the wondrous rebirth of this town of towns. Thanks to the OD Network for bringing us here and making us part of the story. And helping us contribute to the new life.

We're in Baltimore next year -- another town with great public radio, a fabulous water front, and significant urban challenges as well. It's Oct 30-Nov 2, 2011. Put in your calendar. Don't miss it.

Your humble scribe.

Matt

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