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Organization Development Network

Organization Development Network
2025 M Street NW
Suite 800
Washington, DC 20036
T: 202-367-1127
F: 202-367-2127
E: odnetwork@odnetwork.org
www.odnetwork.org

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Special Issue of OD Practitioner – Summer 2017

The Future of Organizations
and What It Means for
Organization Development Practices and Education

Call for Articles

In order to thrive in the current and be ready to engage the future global economy, organizations need to be agile and resilient, which can include:

» addressing the challenges of globalization;
» rethinking how work gets done within the changing employer-employee compact, e.g., virtual and contingent workers, shifting demographics;
» leveraging technology;
» implementing new organizational structures that are more agile and responsive to the business environment;
» encouraging intrapreneurialism;
» embracing multi-culturalism;
» learning how to quickly respond to changes; and
» changing how they change.

We welcome articles that address:

The Future of Organizations
• What are the evolving organizational designs that are fostering agility and resilience?
• How are macro trends such as technology, rate of change, and global scale shaping how organizations evolve and need to operate?
• How is the employer-employee compact changing, and how is that impacting how work gets done?
• How is work, the workforce, and workplace changing?
• What are the processes of leading that are needed?
• How are change methods and processes changing?
• What is the role of OD?

The Future of OD and OD Education
• How can OD be positioned as a major, value-added contribution in this future?
• What is the role of OD within HR transformation to best interact with other functions, such as the CHRO, CLO, Talent Management, Analytics, etc.?
• What are new and emerging OD practices that are needed in this new environment?
• What new capabilities are needed and how can we educate for them?
• How does OD education need to change to prepare OD practitioners to deal with changing organizations, changing environments, and changing employees?
• What needs to stop or be different?

Submission deadline is April 17, 2017

Send articles to the three Special Issue Editors, David Jamieson (djamieson@stthomas.edu), Marjorie Derven (mderven@hudsonrc.com), and Don Warrick (ddwarrick@aol.com), and the Editor of the OD Practitioner, John Vogelsang (jvogelsang@earthlink.net). Submissions should follow the Guidelines for Authors, which appear on page 84 of this issue of the ODP.

Special Issue Editors
David W. Jamieson, PhD, is Professor and Department Chair, Organization Learning & Development at the University of St. Thomas. He is also President of the Jamieson Consulting Group, Inc. and a Distinguished Visiting Scholar in
other OD programs. He has 45 years of experience consulting to organizations on leadership, change, strategy, design and human resource issues. He is a Past National President of the American Society for Training and Development (now Association for Talent Development) and Past Chair of the Management Consultation Division and Practice Theme Committee of the Academy of Management. He was the recent recipient of the 2015 Distinguished Scholar-Practitioner Career Achievement Award from the Academy of Management and The Lifetime Achievement Award from the Organization Development Network. He currently chairs the Organization Development Education Association. Jamieson is author or co-author of 8 books, 16 chapters and dozens of articles in journals and newsletters. He serves as Associate Editor for the Reflections on Experience Section of the Journal of Management Inquiry and on the Editorial Boards for the Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, Journal of Organization Change Management and OD Practitioner. He can be reached at djamieson@stthomas.edu.

Marjorie Derven, Editorial Board member of ODP, is Managing Partner of HUDSON Research & Consulting, Inc. and has over 20 years of consulting experience in change management, diversity and inclusion, global teams, organizational effectiveness, research, and leadership development. She is also a Senior Fellow, Human Capital Practice at The Conference Board, a global nonprofit research organization providing business intelligence. In her work with top-tier companies, Marjorie designs custom solutions that fit organizational culture to promote buy-in, creating momentum to produce the next level performance. She has served on the boards of several professional associations, including the NY Human Resource Society and T+D Editorial Board. A frequent presenter at global and national conferences, Marjorie has written over 20 articles on organizational change and human capital-related issues. She can be reached at mderven@hudsonrc.com.

Don Warrick, PhD, specializes in developing and coaching leaders, developing high performance teams and organizations, and managing organization development, change, and transformation. His latest books are Lessons In Leadership (2011), Lessons In Leading Change (2012), and Lessons In Changing Culture (2013). Warrick is Professor of Management and Organization Change at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs where he holds the lifetime title of President’s Teaching Scholar and has received the Chancellor’s Award, the university’s highest award, the Outstanding Teacher Award for the University, and has also received the Outstanding Faculty Award and many Outstanding Teaching Awards in the College of Business. In addition, Warrick is on the faculty of the University of Colorado Executive MBA program. He also serves as the President of the Warrick Agency Training and Development Company and has been a consultant or trainer for many Fortune 500 and international companies such as Allied Signal, British Petroleum, Dow Corning, Harley-Davidson, Hewlett Packard, IBM, MCI, and Unilever as well as smaller and mid-size companies, public agencies, and colleges and universities. Warrick has received a number of awards for his contributions to his areas of expertise, including being named the Outstanding Organization Development Practitioner of the Year and the Outstanding Human Resources Professional of the Year. In 2011, he was named the Best Professor in Organizational Development by the World HRD Congress. He can be reached at ddwarrick@aol.com.
How do we identify the results and impact of our OD work? How do we correlate interventions with business results? Given there are many tools and techniques—pre and post surveys, case methods, indepth interviews, appreciative inquiry approaches, participatory action research, participant journals, among many others—how do we choose what we will use?

The purpose of this special issue is to help demystify how we can demonstrate the results and impact of our OD work. How can we clarify what we are doing, measure what matters, and make this inquiry part of an ongoing learning process? What are some practical, theory-based, values-based, and evidence-based approaches and practices. We also want to help practitioners understand what is doable and reasonable, and what is not.

We welcome articles that help OD practitioners address:

- What are approaches that have proven to be helpful in identifying the results and impact of OD work?
- What are the limits and potential unintended consequences of misguided measuring initiatives?
- How can measurement be incorporated into an ongoing learning process?
- How do the various OD theories and approaches (e.g., Diagnostic, Dialogic, Humanistic, Complexity) influence how we assess results?
- How can focusing on the process, results, and outcomes be an integral part of OD approaches, e.g., culture change, strategy formulation, process consultation, large system change, increasing collaboration?

**Submission deadline is January 18, 2017**

Submit articles to the two Special Issue Editors, Ross Tartell (rtartell@optonline.net) and Judy Vogel (judy@vogelglaser.com), and the Editor of the OD Practitioner, John Vogelsang (jvogelsang@earthlink.net). Submissions should follow the Guidelines for Authors, which appear on page 84 of this issue of the ODP.

**Special Issue Editors**

Ross Tartell, PhD, specializes in learning and development, executive coaching, and change management. Tartell is a Senior Associate with the Organizational Performance Group (OPG) and Principal at Ross Tartell, PhD, Consulting LLC. Earlier, Tartell was North American Learning Leader for GE Capital Real Estate. He spent 18 years at Pfizer Inc. where he held positions of increasing responsibility as a member of Corporate Human Resources and the Global Pharmaceutical Group. He has been an Adjunct Associate Professor at Teachers College, Columbia University since 1996. He has published articles in a wide range of journals and serves on the editorial boards for Training Magazine and the OD Practitioner. Tartell currently serves as President of ATD SCC. He received his BA in Social Science from Hofstra University, and his MBA in Management and his PhD in Social Psychology from Columbia University. He can be reached at rtartell@optonline.net.

Judy Vogel, MA, of Vogel Glaser & Associates, has been an external OD consultant since 1987 in partnership with David Glaser, before which she was Director of OD and HRD for several corporations and large nonprofit organizations. Her practice specializes in executive coaching, organization design, and assisting HR professionals to perform as successful internal consultants. Her master’s degree is from Johns Hopkins University. Vogel is on the instructional team for American University’s MSOD and is Coordinator of Learning Community Time’s facilitators. Since 1988 she has been a member of the NTL Institute, including being a trainer in its esteemed Human Interaction Labs; and she served on the Board of Directors. She has been granted Emerita Status in NTL. She also has been active in the Chesapeake Bay Organization Development Network and the South Florida Organization Development Network, where she has presented frequent workshops. She has published many articles in the OD Practitioner and has been on the Editorial Review Board for many years. She can be reached at judy@VogelGlaser.com.

**Note:** This is a revised version of the call for articles that appeared in the summer issue of the ODP.
Welcome to the winter 2017 issue of the OD Practitioner. This issue includes articles about the evolving future of organizations and how OD practitioners can become “future ready,” why transformational change in multi-sector organizations is substantially different than change efforts in a single organization, what contributes to a successful change initiative, a coaching and mentoring program to help physicians increase their resilience and achieve developmental goals, some of the challenges of a leadership development program, how to measure the impact of OD interventions, the bottom line results of diversity and inclusion programs, and a personal reflection about learning from one’s own experience.

Mee-Yan Cheung-Judge explores the future of organizations and the implications for OD practitioners. Having searched the literature, listened to futurists, had many conversations with top strategists in the corporate world, and examined the work of different think tanks, Cheung-Judge presents the macro trends shaping how organizations are evolving, how those trends impact the future of work, what are the implications for the evolution of organizations, and how OD practitioners can be “future ready.” Responses to this article will be part of the summer issue of the ODP, “The Future of Organizations and What It Means for Organization Development Practices and Education” (see the call for articles on page 3).

Marty Jacobs contends that undertaking transformational change in a multi-sector, nonprofit coalition is substantially different than in a single organization. The challenges are many, including identifying stakeholders, determining leadership, building trust amongst stakeholders, coordinating work, and maintaining momentum and motivation. These differences require a new approach to multi-sector transformational change as well as the frameworks of transformative and organizational learning. Jacobs explores the differences between single organization transformational change and multi-sector transformational change, using Ackerman Anderson and Anderson’s Change Process Model as the basis for comparison.

John Conbere and Alla Heorhiadi agree that implementation is the key to success of any initiative, be it a change effort or strategic planning. However, the most common things that everyone knows and experiences continue to prevent many organizations from succeeding in implementing and sustaining change. For an initiative or organizational change effort to be sustained, the implementation needs to include consideration of the impact on the whole system; it needs to be grounded in sound data; and it often involves changing managers’ behaviors, which may include changing their mental model of what management entails.

James K. Stoller, Andrea Sikon, and Elaine E. Schulte assert that the issues of physician turnover and drivers of satisfaction are especially topical because physician burnout is a central issue in American healthcare today. Surveys suggest that the prevalence of dissatisfaction among American physicians is generally high, especially in some specialties (e.g., critical care, urology, and emergency room medicine). Stoller, Sikon, and Schulte describe a professional Staff Coaching and Mentoring Program (SCMP) that was created at the Cleveland Clinic in 2008 in response to the faculty’s request for formalized mentorship. The mission of the SCMP is to facilitate a coaching and mentoring network for every faculty member to help increase their resilience and achieve developmental goals by providing training, matching assistance, resources, and networking opportunities.

Kim Happich and Allan H. Church share what they have observed and learned as a result of being intimately involved in the evolution and design of the Leadership Assessment and Development program (LeAD) at PepsiCo. They describe the tools and methods that are employed at each level of the organization, LeAD’s five-phase assessment and feedback process, and their respective assumptions and challenges, with additional insights based on their experience working with (i.e. assessing and development) colleagues and themselves as participants.

Steve H. Cady and JooHyung Kim discuss what OD practitioners can learn from evaluating their interventions. They posit that evaluation of OD interventions has never been more promising than in this era with the advancements of such tools as data analytics; yet it remains challenging for organizations to utilize a proper evaluation strategy. They explore the paradox of competing demands and a pragmatic model for selecting the optimal evaluation strategy. They also offer reflections on evaluation from the perspective of Gestalt OD theory.

Judith Katz and Fredrick Miller maintain that even though there is a greater range of metrics and measures to assess progress with respect to diversity targets and goals, many organizations talk about the importance of D&I to their success but still are not able to make the direct connection to achieving organizational objectives and bottom line results. Katz and Miller present examples of measurable, bottom-line results achieved through the implementation of total systems change efforts to create inclusive workplace practices and interactions that leverage differences.

Marvin Weisbord published his first article in the ODP in 1970. In this issue, he offers a personal reflection on learning to fly and other life lessons.

Practicing OD

This issue of Practicing OD includes six articles about Polarity Thinking, ranging from what are polarities and how to map them to using Polarity Thinking to strengthen and broaden collaboration between the city of Charleston police and the citizens they serve.
The continuous debate as to whether the field of OD is dead, close to death, or alive depends on whether the field and our practices are staying with or ahead of the intense and complex shifts in the environment that impact the world of work and its organizations. This article wants to affirm that, despite our imperfections and lack of coherence, many practitioners in our community have been making both inner and outer shifts to remain relevant to both the organizations and the people we serve. In this article, I will focus on three topics:
1. What are the macro trends shaping how organizations evolve?
2. How do the trends impact the future of work?
3. What are the implications of the macro trends for the evolution of organizations?

Future of Organizations and Implications for OD Practitioners

By Mee-Yan Cheung-Judge

The reality is not so much how many more trends we face, but what complex mix/interaction these factors have with each other that often leads to unpredictable outcomes/consequences.

Back Then
In the 1990s, Peter Drucker published a series of articles for Management Today; some of them were compiled into a two-part book called Managing for the Future. There he touched on many challenges that organizations would face in the future that leaders must deal with to survive.

What are the Macro Trends Shaping How Organizations Evolve?

Two decades later, some of those areas remain current despite the emergence of other factors.

» Permanent cost cutting as a norm;
» The importance of not “losing” culture but to use it to drive change;
» The need for leaders to “walk outside” (walking inside is no longer enough) and ask dumb questions – they need to be extremely externally savvy;
» The critical role of sound governance (and the importance of a “double-bridge” team – i.e. keen cooperation between executive officers and boards);
» The need to pay attention to organization performance (he gave the five tell-tale tests);
» How Research and Development needs to be business-driven, and so do the marketing tactics; and
» The critical importance for the organization to move toward strategic alliances for progress, etc.

He was scarily accurate in his prediction about the following factors organizations will face: the changing world economy; the rise and possible fall of economic integration through the European Union; the rise in the East; the gigantic economic power of China; and the emergence of a new international economic order supported by the rise of the knowledge society in which ICT (information and communication technologies) and technology will make a big difference to how the organization manages its knowledge and runs its operation. He asserted that in times like these, innovation and entrepreneurship will make the
differentiation between those organizations that survive and thrive or not, and leaders need to engage in “organized abandonment” and “transformative learning” to make way for innovation as they are the differential factors for those organizations that make it into the future and those that do not.

Now 2016
Since the 1990s, a lot has been happening on the global scene, and many organizations have been forced to adapt to survive. In preparation for writing this article, I reviewed the literature, attended lectures of futuristic speakers, held many conversations with top strategists in the corporate world, and examined the work of different think tanks. While there are many macro trends, they can be boiled down into six key ones. The labels for these six sound
familiar but as Drucker pointed out – it is the scale, scope, intensity, and how they manifest and their impact that have geared up significantly.

The key macro trends are:

1. **The scale of complexity in the environment.** It is not just in the number of dominant external factors affecting the organization, but the unpredictability of how different factors can have a combustible interaction with each other from unforeseen impact (see Figure 1 as an example).

2. **Resource scarcity.** There is a general but real decline in global financial resources that impact not just the public and third sectors, but have also made corporate operations very challenging (see Table 1 and Figure 2 as illustrations). Most of the top economic players – China, India, Japan, US, UK, and Germany are running on deficits, and the debt as percentage of GDP is significant. We know the interpretation of these figures is complex, but they give a general resource picture.

   The major questions for most organizations regardless of sectors are: How can we keep service provision going while continuing to innovate in our product and service development within the context of increasing financial restrictions? How do we prioritize which services to keep and which to close down? How do we protect the most vulnerable users of our services while maintaining resources to invest in our own human resources, etc.?

3. **Technology breakthroughs.** The increasing scale and scope of the growth of the internet, wireless communication platforms, and other technological innovation have fundamentally shifted the social fabric at every level - the way people, teams, organizations, and society connect and share knowledge. The rules of the game and the way work is done have been significantly reshaped. As Raymond Kurzwell (called by the Wall Street Journal the “restless genius”) said, “the technological change is happening so rapid and profound – it represents a rupture in the fabric of human history” (2001).

   But what is yet to come is quite unimaginable to many of us. The recent World Economic Forum published a report (September, 2015), Deep Shift: Technology Tipping Points and Societal Impact. The panel interviewed over 800 executives and experts from the ICT sector, outlined the details of this condition (Figure 3 and Table 2), and described the six mega ICT trends and the time line of 21 tipping points of innovation by 2025.
John Newton, founder and chief technology officer of the document management firm Alfresco, highlighted the “tipping points” by saying “according to Moore’s law, in 10 years’ time computing will be about 64 times more powerful, storage capacity will be about double that, and network capacity probably about 50 times greater than today” (2014). That means that any problem will not be constrained by computing or space, but by imagination.

4. **Consumer/Customer rights and requirement of transparency.** With a greater awareness of their rights, and better access to information through technology, customers/consumers become much more demanding for increasing transparency and accountability from those who provide services and sell goods. This coupled with increasing expectations of higher service levels and increasing product quality within the context of faster delivery time and greater individualization of “hi-touch” services, organizations find that the only sustainable way to maintain these relationships is not to be just “nice to have” but to become a “must have” organization. Blue Ocean Strategy becomes a rare luxury for organization.

5. **Population Movement and rapid urbanization.** The massive scale of population movement has now become endemic. In less than 5% of countries, statehood = peoplehood, which means very few political states have the same ethnic and racial group inside their state line. This population movement has been compounded by the ongoing political turmoil around the globe. This phenomenon of both forced and voluntary migration of populations towards more politically stable countries has serious social, economic, and political implications for both the exiting and receiving countries. The knock-on impact escalated the “rapid scale of urbanization.” The World Economic Forum notes that by the year 2050 there will be a near doubling of the urban population worldwide to 6.2 billion, i.e. 70% of the projected world population of 8.9 billion.

    This rate of urbanization has vast implications for every sector within the receiving countries. The provision of housing, education, medical assistance, social services, employment, welfare, etc. to a diverse population has piled an increased burden on mainly public sector institutions, especially in the face of continuous reduction of financial resources. For most organizations, this population movement has also

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**Table 2. 21 Tipping Points**

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<td>• Storage for all</td>
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<td>• Ubiquitous computing</td>
<td>• 3D printing &amp; consumer products</td>
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<td>• Wearable internet</td>
<td>• Big data for decisions</td>
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<td>• 3D printing and manufacturing</td>
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changed the profile of man/woman power planning and resourcing as there are insufficient human resources from the local population—bringing with it a host of complex issues in working with diversity and inclusion.

6. Demographic shift. The population movement together with the changing demographic profile has created a compounded level of complexity for society worldwide. Figure 4 shows that countries with the least developed economies face a challenge with a growing and restless young population, especially when their pursuit of better lives is frustrated by poor access to education and limited opportunities in skill development and employment. Hence the surge to seek greater opportunities to improve their life chances led to increasing migration. Conversely, the countries with the most developed economies are suffering with a relatively lower birth rate and have major gaps in human resources at every level from medical professions to the manual and service industries. On top of that, prolong life span means there are growing demands for services and health care for the aged population, as the demographic profile has placed a major burden on the financial and healthcare systems.

These are just some macro trends happening in the world; there are many more factors. The reality is not so much how many more trends we face, but what complex mix/interaction these factors have with each other that often leads to unpredictable outcomes/consequences.

How Do the Trends Impact the Future of Work?

Many academics, major consultancy firms, industry leaders, and entrepreneurs have been conscious of the impact these mega trends have on the way work is done, and many of them have begun to shift and adapt the way their work is done. The following reports summarize some of these “future ways of working.”

1. PWC published a report in 2014, The Future of Work – A Journey to 2022, in which over 10,000 people from China, India, Germany, the UK, and the US gave their views on the future of work and what it means for them. Key data include:
   - 66% see the future of work as a world full of possibility and believe they will be successful;
   - 53% think technological breakthroughs will transform the way people work over the next 5-10 years;
   - 2 out of 5 people around the world believe that traditional employment will not be around in the future. Instead, people will have their own “brands” and sell their skills to those who need them.

2. Work Foundation (A well-known UK think tank) published a report in January 2016 in which they predicted that by 2020, 70% of the workforce will adopt mobile working.

3. Adapting to a New World of Work, reflecting on KPMG’s Future of Work Business Leaders’ Survey, 2014, shared key changes predicted by graduates (Gen X and Y). They found:
   - 75% believe the nine-to-five office culture will end.
   - 76% expect greater flexibility to prescribe their own working hours.
   - 68% think that virtual networks will result in greater employee engagement and higher productivity.
As it stands, organizations like Netflix, Airbnb, Uber, and of course Google have continued to experiment further into alternative structures and processes to encourage innovative ways for delivering work. Their aim is to ensure their people will take advantage of collaboration, build a fluid understanding of work, act intentionally about the lack of rigid hierarchy, experiment with quicker decision-making structures and processes, and promote the intelligent use of data, all with a view to engaging successfully with customers on a massive scale.

The crucial features of a human cloud are:
- These are not jobs but tasks or projects;
- Performed anywhere in the world by people, on demand, who are not employees but independent workers;
- Much of it is white-collar piece work;
- There are online platforms that act as intermediaries, e.g., UPWORK, SUPER TASKER, STICKY CROWD, FREELANCER, PEOPLE PER HOUR, Amazon’s “Mechanical Turks;” and
- There are three parties: those who pose a request, called “requesters”; those who do the work, “tinkers” (in Amazon’s terms); and the intermediaries who take care of the financial transaction plus the rating tracking of all the tinkers’ performance with clear public ratings.

According to research, in 2014 employers spent between $2.8 billion – $3.7 billion globally on payments to workers. Online platforms like UPWORK processed about $1 billion worth of payments in 2014 from which they took a 10% cut. Its chief executive predicts they will reach $10 billion bill- ing in another six years. So, it is a growing business. Some of the organizations have introduced the human cloud internally to test it – attempting to erase the rigidity of bounded roles.


The future of work patterns span a wide spectrum depending on what type of industry the organization belongs to, the size, the scale of globalization, the nature of the work, the type of customer interface they will need to maintain, etc.

At the extreme, more work is carried out by robots, services are provided by driverless cars, and the world of smart drugs enhances intelligence, memory, and work (even though they are still very much on the experimental side), etc.

On the other end of the spectrum are the less radical but gradual systemic adjustments organizations must make. Some of the areas organizations have taken steps are:

- Attracting and retaining talent.
- Running cost cutting and growth strategies in parallel.
- Increasing the flexibility of human resources deployment.
- Building conditions that help boost a sense of wellbeing amongst those who work in the organization.
- Fertilizing the ground for more cross-boundary ways of working with sufficient diversity and collective
Intelligence to create solutions for big audacious problems.

- Having smaller offices to contain staff (every desk in London costs £8,000-£12,000 per year).
- Encouraging an increased scale of mobile (virtual) working.
- Creating a “bleisure” culture – a portmanteau of “blur” and “leisure” – the way that technology and culture have made our work and free time less distinct from one another.
- Providing smartphones and cloud-based collaboration tools that offer constant connectivity to erase the neatly compartmentalized 9-5 work day.
- Engaging in office design to promote personal reflection, collaborative labs, e.g., with a big white wall, rooms with ping-pong tables, and bean bags to relax and reflect.
- Continuing to experiment with the bubble organization – role defined by deployment and accountabilities.
- Building integrative service delivery models with commissioning organizations, suppliers, and other third parties working together.

As it stands, organizations like Netflix, Airbnb, Uber, and of course Google have continued to experiment further into alternative structures and processes to encourage innovative ways for delivering work. Their aim is to ensure their people will take advantage of collaboration, build a fluid understanding of work, act intentionally about the lack of rigid hierarchy, experiment with quicker decision-making structures and processes, and promote the intelligent use of data, all with a view to engaging successfully with customers on a massive scale.

The robust evaluation of why the above ways are fitter for a future oriented organization has been well put by Edwin Smith writing for The Times in UK (2014), “the multi-billion-dollar valuation of these businesses and the short space of time in which they have been achieved are testament to how this way of working is paying off.”

So, if that is how the future way of working is going to be, what sort of “organizing principles” or “structure” does an organization need to be “future ready?”

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**Figure 5. Map of Organizations**

The Implications of Macro Trends on the Evolution of Organization

Back in 2000, in his book *The Art of Focused Conversation*, Brian Stanfield created a map of organizations using eight variables to differentiate four types of organizations (see *Figure 5*). The eight variables are: Leadership, Structure, Preoccupation, Mission Context, The Worker, Communication, Values, and Skills. Like any typology, it is not perfect as organizations seldom fit into one type along all eight variables, but conceptually this map has given us something to adapt and play with – both as a diagnostic aid and as an intervention steer. Having worked with many organizations, most organizations are still hovering between the “Hierarchical” organization and the “Collaborative” organization.

The reality is that the evolution of organizations by now has moved on significantly. *Figure 6* shows us that the organization can and should take steps towards Wirearchy – picking up characteristics that are deemed to help them to be better “fit” to be even more future ready.

Just for illustration, let us take a quick look at the characteristics of both Holacracy and Wirearchy organizations. Both are more “organizing principles” than rigid structures. In Holacracy, people work within *circles* that represent different aspects of an organization’s work. Staff do not have a job description, but *roles*. An individual can have more than one role within different circles, contributing in any areas that they can. The person who is empowered in a given role has autonomy over that domain. The circle can undergo evolutionary changes but there will not be major organization restructuring. Some of the early adopters are Yammer, Blogger, Twitter, Zappos, and Medium. However, this way of working, especially when introduced from top down vs. enabling the staff to choose to opt in, poses great strain on people as the change required is too fast and too deep. But nonetheless, the organizing principles offer real alternatives to a long tradition of hierarchical ways of organizing.

Figure 6. Evolution of Organization

The Implications of Macro Trends on the Evolution of Organization

- Balance structured work and the sharing of complex knowledge
- Create the climate for unstructured social networking, which will increase innovation through a diversity of ideas.
- Communities of practice when linked with collaboration will weave the organization and its people into a wirearchy
- Focus on Results enabled by interconnected people and technology
- 2-10 people; 2-10 weeks – each project is a PROBE
- Communities of practice can help make the transition from hierarchies to networks, or wirearchy.
- In summary:
  1) Absence of imposed centralized control;
  2) The autonomous nature of subunits;
  3) High connectivity between the subunits; and
  4) The webby nonlinear causality of peers influencing peers.

Figure 7. Wirearchy = Hierarchies + Communities + Networks
Wirearchy comes from hierarchies plus communities of practice and networks. Figures 7 and 8 show the evolution of wirearchies. It is an organizing principle around a networked world, with sub units acting autonomously to solve problems by having high connectivity and acting in a webby nonlinear way. The culture and behavior patterns of this type of organization reflect exactly those characteristics: collaborative learning; high connectivity; lots of cross unit work; leveraging collective intelligence; building entrepreneurial behavior; clear boundaries but high experimentation and bounded autonomy; setting up conditions and processes to breed agility and high adaptability with rapid prototyping and feedback, but without sacrificing the back room structure and support with the target quality standard. Above all else, what makes this type of organization work is a high relational orientation among the system players. Elements of these characteristics have been pioneered and adopted by many of the ICT organizations for over a decade, and different aspects of them have proven to work.

An example case in point is a children’s social service team in one of the UK Local Authorities who were facing dramatic funding cuts that seriously compromised their ability to execute their way of care for vulnerable children. One social worker thought, “there has to be a way to find the savings so we can keep the service standard integral.” Through conversations with her team colleagues, they identified one way to retain their service standard was to cut the court hearing time on child protection cases, which currently stands at 58 weeks.

Next, they went beyond the team to the “social work professional communities” in their area, floating and testing the ideas with other children’s service teams in three other local councils. They received enthusiastic responses. With the beginning of the cross-location communities of practice, they worked out a proposal to cut the delay in court hearing cases to achieve savings. But they soon realized there were gaps of knowledge that required them to network with other professional communities to seek help, e.g., legal and finance. So, through their collective networks, they created a task team to increase the scale of innovative ideas via diversity thinking.

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Eventually they devised a plan, wrote a proposal, worked through the necessary governance processes, and finally submitted a proposal to a regional body. As a result, they managed to cut the court hearing time by half and saved £12 million – which they channelled back into the children’s services work.

Many futuristic, technological, and organizational writers have captured the characteristics of the future-oriented organization, but there has not been a coherent study backed up by consistent research data. The subject will benefit from having a dedicated edition to advance the understanding further. For now, I have summed up the Characteristics of the Future Organization in Figure 9 from both my working theories and whatever data/articles/reports I can find. I hope the grid will encourage you the reader to pull together your own cumulative working theories from your observations and experiences in supporting organizations.

The challenges facing us are that in order for organizations to survive, they need to explore various new possibilities for organization configuration, processes in getting work done, and the re-designing of an organization’s variables. In parallel, new types of OD thinking and intervention need to be explored. Organizations need OD to travel alongside them as so much of the success will require humans to unlearn something primal and basic in our education and upbringing such as: being organized, well structured, having control over our own turf, working on individual or solo perspectives and achievements, aiming for specific targeted achievements, etc.

The following are the headlines of what work we have begun:

» We have begun our work in the dynamics of tensions and polarity management – often holding the polarity of keeping what is core to OD values and practices while acquiring something new and different to build on what we have while discarding the obsolete practices, noting that we cannot take clients to places we ourselves have refused to go.

» We have been adapting our change approaches and experimenting the way we deliver “help.” Our colleagues in the complexity and chaos area have taught us many things, especially, in how we can work more effectively with complexity and emergence. Though, we can go further in being more masterful in this area.

» We have learnt about the importance of using a lot of the “C” methodology to surface clients’ own wisdom and community ownership; e.g. supporting them to increase Cross functional interaction; becoming a much more Connected workforce; designing processes to enable them to engage in regular Co-construction and Co-creation; helping the system to surface Collective intelligence; making Cross boundary work a norm; supporting L & D colleagues to reshape the learning process to make collaborative learning a requirement rather than an exception; making growth strategy to become an occasion for Co-venturing; and teaching clients how to use Co-Creativity as a tool for innovation.

» Many of us have slowly but genuinely begun undertaking the necessary inner work to let go of the need for control and learning how to work with emergence. We have gone further to work on letting go of our need to be an expert, to be the one capable to solve their wicked problems. When we are brave, we openly admit that we do not KNOW the HOW TO in those novel situations the clients are facing. We intentionally help clients to surface their wisdom as equal partners, sharing intelligence and perspectives to carry out joint design on what will be the best for the organization. Getting to be future ready, many
of us self-initiate and persevere in the deconstruction process of our past ways of mastery, and learn, in some areas, to be novices again.

» We also have re-embraced what some of the core OD values really mean in practice, not just as rhetoric but as values in action, e.g., engaging in lifelong learning, working with diversity to create traction for fresh ideas, helping the system to reveal itself to itself (action research), doing their own discovery. Not to mention, from the beginning, to raise the client’s ability to self-organize, encourage people to be “expert” in their own areas of concern, passing on skills and knowledge to the clients so that they will have sufficient ability to sustain their own change.

» We have kept watch of the methodological implications from the changing context and many of us figured out, unless we stretch our intervention repertoire, we will render ourselves unfit to support clients. So many of us have been eager to learn from other disciplines and embrace them in our OD practice: from IT, from economic behaviour, from network mapping, teaching ourselves rapid learning and prototyping cycles, etc. We understand the importance of the action-reflect-revise-action and plan cycle, the emphasis on action, small experimentation, ongoing developmental evaluation. We know how important it is to pass our skills to leaders we work with.

» We work intentionally to build strategic alliance partnership work with other professional communities: HR, Talent Management, Leadership Development, strategists, customer insight teams, economists, service delivery teams, etc., in order for us to stay on the sharp edge of innovation in supporting organizations not just to MOVE, but to PRACTICE the way to be a “future ready” way of operating.

In Figure 10, a simple framework was put together to outline the ingredients of an effective future ready practitioner. The framework is my working theory rather than a research-based conclusion. There are six categories in this framework: characteristics, mind-set, values, use of self, skills, and knowledge. Under each of the categories, there are further sub points to signpost the specific ingredients. Like any working theories, I hope it will stimulate colleagues to continue to add, subtract, and build their own framework to expand our collective knowledge, which in turn will help us to adjust our formal and informal education and development programs for future OD practitioners.

The Focus of Our Work in the Future

The followings are some of the crucial types of work we will both need to engage in more as well as continuously gain mastery from:

1. **Teaching system thinking to clients**
   a. **Input.** Especially about how to help organizations to become externally savvy regardless of ranks, divisions, locations, so to enable the input data to be on the tip of everyone’s tongue to ask “What? So what? Now What?” We need to gain mastery in the strategic scenario planning processes.

   b. **Through Put.** Especially about helping the organization to understand and know how to ensure internal changes need to happen at the same speed as external changes. How to match the internal alignment to support the strategic ambitions of the organization within the context it functions.
c. **Output.** To support organizations to continuously work with their staff and various stakeholders—especially their customers and consumers—about how to make their output—be it products or services or both—relevant to those who consume them in order to stay relevant.

Systems thinking is the bedrock of complexity and chaos perspective, e.g., complex adaptive system.

2. **Focus on patterns and behavioral work**
   Both Schein and Burke have expounded that “without touching culture, nothing has been touched.” This area of work is mainly about pattern identification and pattern shifting. Much of the ability to initiate, run, and be successful in operating a future ready organization is dependent on the ability of the system leaders and members to identify and be able to shift and adopt “fitter” behavior patterns.

What kind of behavior patterns will we need to support clients to adopt, if we look at the characteristics of the future ready organization (listed in Figure 9)?
- Operate based on collective intelligence, sharing information, generating new ideas with others.
- Co-operative competition to drive innovation and creativity.
- Blurring of organizational boundaries and proactively moving towards virtual collaborative scenarios.
- Self-manage productivity and self-organization to form groups to bid for projects of their interest.
- Strong in central support but not central controls – with the central playing supportive and facilitative roles.
- Willing to take calculated risks and engage in rapid prototyping cycles.
- Build flexible structures to enhance agility.
- Leaders become network weavers and innovation stimulators.
- Include customers and citizens as part of the policy formulation task force.

Our job is to re-think how to be innovative, to develop middle managers into OD practitioners who know how to diagnose and intervene in different types of situations and who know sufficient group dynamics that they can experiment with other forms of teamwork. We need to ensure they all have basic facilitation skills to build the type of work team that will know how to network, resolve conflict, identify who and know how to collaborate, and build constructive relationships.

4. **Mesh with executive leadership education**

OD professionals need to become key partners with those who hold the budget and the content approval of executive and different layers of leadership development. Future-oriented leaders need to know a different range of topics such as some of the following topics that have not been successful in making it into the ongoing type of leadership development program.
- What is an organization and how to build and maintain “fit,” “effective,” and “healthy” organizations?
- What are group dynamics, and how to use group dynamics to build leading edge thinking?
- How to work with complex and chaotic change, especially what to do with emergence.
- How to be a systems thinker.
- How to do network mapping and become a network weaver.
- How to become skilful dialogical containers, using their dialogical skills to stimulate meaningful dialogue across boundaries.
- How to HOLD the ongoing tension of polarities facing them as leaders, e.g., front room and back room, clockwise and swarmware, sufficient boundary system dynamics has always pointed to the key roles of the middle. When one looks at the type of organizations that have survived and thrive, we know it is the supervisors, the line leaders, the functional leaders, the strong operational core (the middle) who hold the roles to reshape the new way of working.

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differentiation and loose coupling, sufficient structure and emergence, etc. Leaders need to know how to think and work in a polarity management manner, especially, when things are ambiguous and a clear logic of decisions is not evident.

5. Keep our core work core
Finally, we should continue to do what we have been doing for a long time.
- Work with the whole system.
- Work on the duality of building organization effectiveness and health.
- Build effective working groups and pass on such skills to members of any work group.
- Be more customer/consumer/patient/citizen centric. This external perspective will stand all organizations in the right position to survive.
- Understand how to achieve an optimal balance between external and internal focus. When an organization can achieve the right balance between managing internal organizational efficiency and effectiveness and externally delivering “good growth,” they will be in a strong place.
- Understand Weisbord’s concept about building community in the workplace, as he talked about when there is mutual support to harness energy, productivity will go beyond imagination through community. Regardless of which new way of “organizing,” relationships remain as the top work for all.
- Engage and improve in our “pattern identification” and “pattern shifting” work, and continue to expand our applied behavioural science through the emergence nature of how people continue to shape the nature of work and the workplace.

In Summary

Being Future Ready is an exciting and complex topic for both organizations and us practitioners. We will need to do a lot more work sharing our practice, research data, and experiences. We are facing new scenarios for which there has been little guidance. This topic deserves the attention of an edited volume in which a community of practitioners begin to focus on answering this question with concrete experience and case studies to abstract from experience to principles, to concepts, to theories.

We are confident that the field of OD is equipped to come alongside with leaders to work things out as long as we remain faithful learners in the field of applied behavioural science. OD, more than any field, has the knowledge, tools, and practice platform to support organizations to continue their evolutionary journey.

References


The nonprofit sector has been undergoing significant change, particularly since the 2008–2009 recession. Many nonprofits recognize that sustainable social impact can only be accomplished collectively amongst partner organizations and stakeholders. However, there exists a huge gap between the current reality for nonprofit work and the desired outcomes for the sector. Major social issues such as housing, poverty, education, and domestic violence are complex problems that no one entity can solve. Add to that the reality of tight resources, forcing nonprofits to dispatch those resources with extreme care, and an economy that is slowly limping along, it is no wonder nonprofits are struggling to redefine themselves. Nevertheless, nonprofits continue to operate as they have for decades with a singular focus on their individual missions. The concept of multi-sector transformational change is still quite foreign to many, and although the number of examples of such inter-organizational endeavors is growing, the practice is still relatively new and without a significant history.

The literature reflects this disparity as well. Much of the research and literature is conducted and written from the perspective of working within a single organization, and those organizations are more likely to be from the for-profit sector. Well-known authors, such as Schein (1988, 2009, 2010, 2013), Anderson and Ackerman Anderson (2001), Block (2011), Verlander (2012), Brooks and Edwards (2013), and Senge (Senge, 1990; Senge et al., 1999) all consult mainly, if not entirely, in the corporate world and exclusively within single organizations. Much of the theoretical underpinnings of their collective work applies universally across sectors, but the processes or techniques often do not fit in the nonprofit or public sectors. For example, Block’s consultant roles and faces of resistance outline common human themes that are relevant in most, if not all change efforts, but his approach to contracting (2011) simply does not work in multi-sector projects. Rather than a contracting meeting, multi-sector work requires a series of meetings to clarify the purpose and outcomes for the change. Often this work is divided into a discovery/planning contract and a design/implementation contract, specifically because the discovery and planning phase can be lengthy and unpredictable. Ackerman Anderson and Anderson’s Change Process Model (CPM) (2001) relies on transformational change theory, but their drivers for change take some effort to translate into a form usable by the nonprofit or public sector. Furthermore, language intensifies the differences amongst the sectors, a particularly challenging problem if multi-sector work includes all three sectors. Words and phrases like “return on investment,” “customer requirements,” “supply chain,” and “business process groups” do not necessarily have a nonprofit or public sector equivalent.

Nevertheless, there is a growing body of literature that focuses specifically on community level change. Born’s work (2012, 2014) specifically focuses on the power of conversation, connections, and collectively thinking together to raise
standards in communities. He outlines his approach to transformational change in communities in four steps: conversing, engaging, collaborating, and casting a vision (2012). Westley, Zimmerman, and Patton (2007) apply complexity theory to their work, noting that in complex systems it is not possible to control outcomes. Rather, emergence, described as “. . . things that are unpredictable, which seem to result from the interaction between elements, and are outside any one agent’s control” (2007, p. 128) and resilience, “. . . the capacity to experience massive change and yet still maintain the integrity of the original” (2007, p. 65) are necessary attributes for successful transformational change and social innovation.

Dialogic OD (Bushe, 2013; Bushe & Marshak, 2015; Cummings & Cummings, 2014; Ray & Goppelt, 2013) offers additional theoretical and practical contributions to guide multi-sector transformational change. The traditional model of OD, now referred to as Diagnostic OD, places emphasis on planned change, top-down control, and the OD practitioner as an outside, objective observer (Ray & Goppelt, 2013). In contrast, Dialogic OD relies on the emergence of new ideas to guide the community toward its desired outcome, encourages the engagement of the whole community in co-creation, and recognizes that the OD practitioner is not separate from the larger system (Bushe, 2013). Dialogic OD “. . . is not about incremental change, which is how to make the current system better at what it already is and does. Transformation changes the very nature of the community to be better at what it aspires to be and do” (Bushe, 2013, p. 12). Dialogic OD is not exclusively practiced in communities – individual organizations in all three sectors can benefit from its application – but the practice of Dialogic OD aligns well with the requirements for successful multi-sector transformational change.

Undertaking multi-sector transformational change is substantially different than the vast majority of consulting case studies outlined in the literature. The challenges are many, including identifying stakeholders, determining leadership, building trust amongst stakeholders, coordinating work, and maintaining momentum and motivation. These differences require a new approach to multi-sector transformational change as well as the frameworks of transformative learning and organizational learning in order to succeed. There is still much to be learned about placing potential models into practice successfully. This paper will explore the differences between single organization transformational change and multi-sector transformational change, using Ackerman Anderson and Anderson’s CPM (2001) as the basis for comparison. It will also offer possible new approaches that are specifically designed with multi-sector work in mind.

Areas of Difference

Ackerman Anderson and Anderson’s CPM (2001) begins when an organization experiences a wake-up call indicating a need for change. The author’s divide the transformational change process into the following nine phases:

1. Prepare to Lead the Change
2. Create Organizational Vision, Commitment, and Capacity
3. Assess the Situation to Determine Design Requirements
4. Design the Desired State
5. Analyze the Impact
6. Plan and Organize for Implementation
7. Implement the Change
8. Celebrate and Integrate the New State
9. Learn and Course Correct

In my analysis of the differences, I was able to discern the following seven areas of difference between multi-sector transformational change and change within a single organization: scope, complexity, leadership, discovery phase, timeframe, structure, and lack of history. I will discuss each in detail.

Scope

The reach of a multi-sector change effort is far more extensive than single organization change, encompassing internal stakeholders as well as a comprehensive slice of external stakeholders. The CPM determines the scope of a change effort by analyzing the drivers for change (Ackerman Anderson & Anderson, 2001). As mentioned earlier, the drivers for change do not translate well in the public or nonprofit sectors. Instead, a more useful approach to determining scope is for the coalition leading the effort to develop a community assets map. Community assets include individuals, associations, institutions, natural resources, and local economic linkages and business assets (Allen et al., 2002). Mapping them gives...
participants in the change effort a visual picture of what currently exists and where it is located. The map will also assist in identifying key stakeholder groups and determining system boundaries.

In addition to creating a community assets map to determine current reality, the coalition should also develop a system map in order to understand more fully how the change effort fits within the individual organizations as well as how it fits within the larger system. This can be accomplished by first understanding how the coalition is embedded or nested at three levels: (1) within the system of interest (the coalition itself), (2) within the enclosing system (the larger system), and (3) within the subsystems (the individual organizations) (Walton, 2004). Figure 1 gives an example of how the Vermont inpatient mental healthcare system is embedded within the larger healthcare system of Vermont. There are three subsystems within the system of interest: the state psychiatric hospital, six designated hospitals with non-secure beds, and twelve crisis bed facilities. Developing this map enables the coalition to discern the linkages amongst the various systems and whether there is any overlap in services or programs.

The second part of making sense of the system of interest is to map the system’s linkages by mapping the suprasystem: “The suprasystem is comprised of the system of interest and other connected systems” (Walton, 2004, p. 272). Using the same example from above, Figure 2 maps the suprasystem of the Vermont inpatient mental healthcare system. The suprasystem of Vermont’s mental healthcare system involves several organizations with both centralized and egalitarian relationships. Centralized relationships are characterized by dominance of one organization over another whereas egalitarian relationships tend to be more collegial (Walton, 2004). The double-headed arrows represent egalitarian relationships while the single-headed arrows signify centralized relationships. The suprasystem map delineates critical relationships to which the coalition will need to pay attention. As the coalition moves forward with change, the suprasystem map will provide insight into potential unanticipated consequences resulting from the change.

Finally, the focus of leadership attention factors into the scope of a transformational change project and is essentially mirror opposites between single organization change and multi-sector change. The CPM encourages organizational leaders to turn their focus away from external drivers to the internal drivers for change in their organization (Ackerman Anderson & Anderson, 2001), something to which they are typically unaccustomed. If a business is attempting to transform work processes to align better with current technology or a new product, the focus in large part will be internal with some attention paid to customers and the supply chain. The opposite is true for multi-sector transformational change. If a coalition leading transformational change is addressing issues within the inpatient mental healthcare system, for example, it must focus externally on all the other systems influencing it, to engage them in collective learning, and to determine leverage points within the larger system. The focus may shift slightly during implementation to ensure individual organizations are supported as they carry out the implementation, but the overall focus is still predominantly external.

Coalition leaders must find that delicate balance between internal and external focus throughout the project, an imperative much less demanding within a single organization. Clearly, the scope of a multi-sector transformational change effort far exceeds that of a single organization effort and thus adds further complexity to an already complex project.

Complexity

The complexity of multi-sector transformational change projects far surpasses that of a project within an individual organization. The scope is already much broader, and the inclusion of a wide range of stakeholders adds to that complexity. The systems map begins to identify those stakeholders, but the coalition needs to take that step further and conduct a social network analysis:

A social network is a social structure made up of individuals (or organizations) called “nodes,” which are tied (connected) by one or more specific types of interdependency, such as friendship, kinship, common interest, financial exchange, dislike, sexual relationships, or relationships of beliefs, knowledge, or prestige.
Social network analysis views social relationships in terms of network theory consisting of nodes and ties (also called edges, links, or connections). Nodes are the individual actors within the network, and ties are the relationships between the actors. (Wasserman & Faust, 1994, p. 1)

In doing so, the coalition begins to delve into the level of individuals. Social network analysis measures factors such as how close individuals are to others in the network, the degree of connectedness, the number of ties to others, and how well an individual's ties know each other, to name a few (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). These measures will prove beneficial as the change effort progresses. Social networks are most useful when represented visually, and this can be accomplished through sophisticated software or simply drawn on paper. Social networks are as important in single organization change but are far less complex.

The political dynamics of change can be both challenging and advantageous. The CPM recommends addressing the political environment through open dialogue (Ackerman Anderson & Anderson, 2001). Change leaders within the organization are likely to be aware of those dynamics and can design a process for engaging participants in a constructive and generative manner. The political reality of a multi-sector change effort is considerably more complex. Not only is there intra-organizational politics, there is also inter-organizational politics and the politics of external stakeholders such as funders, local and state politicians, oversight agencies, and businesses. This requires an ongoing process of relationship building with all involved to create the space for open dialogue. Again, this adds another layer of complexity to the project.

Anticipating any type of unintended consequences of a change effort is the job of impact analysis. The CPM defines impact analysis as “...[assessing] the impacts of the desired state on the current organization and its culture and people. In essence, this function is a detailed gap analysis, determining the differences between the old state and the desired state” (Ackerman Anderson & Anderson, 2001, p. 171). While an individual organization can be quite complex, particularly if it is large and global, the task of conducting an impact analysis within a single organization is less demanding simply because it is less complex. In multi-sector transformational change, outcomes are uncertain, the process is continually emerging, and the environment is constantly changing, all of which are magnified by the number of entities involved in the change effort. Nonetheless, coalitions need to consider potential unintended consequences on a regular basis.

While an individual organization can be quite complex, particularly if it is large and global, the task of conducting an impact analysis within a single organization is less demanding simply because it is less complex. In multi-sector transformational change, outcomes are uncertain, the process is continually emerging, and the environment is constantly changing, all of which are magnified by the number of entities involved in the change effort. Nonetheless, coalitions need to consider potential unintended consequences on a regular basis.

Leadership

Transformational change requires a shift in mindset on the part of leaders, something that does not come easily to those accustomed to directing and controlling their organization. The CPM recommends extensive leadership training to prepare leaders for the rigors of transformational change, to support them in making the necessary shift in mindset and to convey the importance of allowing the process to emerge (Ackerman Anderson & Anderson, 2001). This preparation is critical in any transformational effort. Unfortunately, the resources to accomplish this are not likely to be available in a multi-sector change effort. The nonprofit and public sectors are famously resource poor and must instead improvise to find alternatives for this essential preparation. One option is to create the conditions for what Rein & Gustafsson refer to as “emergent communities of practice” (Rein & Gustafsson, 2007). These conditions include building trust, establishing a clear division of labor, ensuring key individuals have an apprentice, and offering opportunities for social bonding. If this seems unlikely to happen or too slow to happen, the coalition could also consider setting up a community of practice in a more formal manner. Although the process may be emergent, building leadership capacity into the effort is essential.

Transformative and organizational learning are key factors in transformational
change. Transformative learning is focused at the individual level and is defined as an individual’s ability to question and change one’s worldview (Henderson, 2002; Perkins et al., 2007; Silberstang & London, 2009). Transformative learning and organizational learning are interdependent, with transformative learning as the stimulus for organizational learning (Bess, Perkins, & McCown, 2011; Henderson, 2002; Perkins et al., 2007). Transformational change requires organizational learning capacity in the form of aligning organizational systems and creating a learning culture (Bess et al., 2011). Reflection is as important in organizational learning as it is in transformative learning (Bess et al., 2011). Leadership in both single and multi-sector change must be able to engage in and model transformative learning as well as develop a learning culture within the organizations. The challenge for coalition leaders is to grow learning cultures in multiple organizations. One approach is for the coalition to become its own learning organization and model the process and culture for the partner organizations.

**Discovery Phase**

The Upstream Change phase (Ackerman Anderson & Anderson, 2001) of the CPM is foundational to any transformational change effort regardless of complexity and scope. Nonetheless, how it unfolds in a single organization versus multiple organizations is quite different. The CPM recommends starting this phase by staffing the effort and developing a case for change by asking questions such as “... Why transform?” “What needs to transform?” and “What outcomes do we want from this transformation?” (Ackerman Anderson & Anderson, 2001, p. 39). In multi-sector transformational change this phase is best described as a discovery phase, and the questions are framed differently. Such a change effort often evolves organically when a few organizations begin to realize they share interest in a particularly intractable problem and realize that no one organization is going to solve the problem. The question is not “Why transform?” – it is usually obvious that something needs to change – but rather “How do we come to a common agreement about the nature of the problem?” Community assets mapping, system mapping, and social network analysis are all part of this discovery process. Agreement on the nature of the problem must happen before answering any questions about outcomes or design for change.

Staffing a multi-sector change effort happens as the discovery phase reveals the various stakeholder groups that need to participate in the effort. Those initiating the change will need to build relationships amongst the stakeholder groups. Those sitting at the table may have very little in the way of a relationship with each other, and it is doubtful they will reach consensus on the vision or goals for the project until they have had a chance to build trust amongst themselves. If the effort is to be successful, then detractors must also be represented at the table, which adds to the challenge of relationship building. Many of the stakeholders are likely to be volunteers, which can change the nature of the relationship. All these factors contribute to a lengthy process of staffing the change effort. Ongoing dialogue amongst coalition members can facilitate the process of building those relationships. As Born points out in the Engage phase of his process:

Multi-sector conversations provide the platform to understand that even though we all want the best for our community, and even though we have a common vision of what our community should be, agreement on how we go about making it that way need not be the same (2012, p. 41).

Ackerman Anderson and Anderson (2001) also support the use of dialogue in building commitment and aligning change leaders within an organization. However, in a single organization change effort, it is unlikely there is a need to pay attention to relationship building to this extent.

**Timeframe**

The discovery phase alone illustrates the different timeframes for single organization change versus multi-sector change.

That difference extends to all phases of the CPM. Ackerman Anderson and Anderson (2001) discuss the kickoff of the project like the beginning of a game or race. Kickoff may be an apt metaphor for the typical corporate change effort, but multi-sector change efforts are probably better described as a warm-up run for a marathon. There are no “fans” waiting for the start of the game; rather, the discovery phase is a lengthy, if not nonstop, period where both the shared vision and the process need to emerge along with the implementation. In a single organization effort, only the implementation is emergent. Similarly, it is improbable a multi-sector transformational change effort will reach its desired state, often an ideal toward which the coalition continues to work. Therefore, there is no need to dismantle the structures put in place for facilitating the change. Learning and course correcting will happen on an ongoing basis.

As a result, celebrating successes becomes more challenging in multi-sector work. The desired state, as mentioned above, is either an unattainable ideal that keeps the project moving forward or a distant goal that will not be realized for some years. Unlike with single organizations, there is no obvious endpoint at which to celebrate. Furthermore, because the process is emergent, it is difficult to identify milestones. Consequently, coalition leaders need to be attentive to the small successes that can be celebrated at intervals throughout the project. They are likely capturing data for measuring progress that will be suitable in determining both major and minor accomplishments. Like much of multi-sector work, celebrations will be emergent.

The time commitment required from change leaders within a single organization differs significantly from that required of coalition leaders in multi-sector work. Ackerman Anderson and Anderson (2001) recognize the importance of making time for any change effort:

Change leaders must focus on doing what is good for the overall organization as it transforms while keeping it operational, especially at start-up. There is
In multi-sector transformational change, one of the first tasks is to create some form of structure by establishing a steering committee or coalition. The membership of this coalition will largely reflect identified stakeholder groups as well as agencies and organizations addressing the particular issue. Many of the coalition leaders will be leaders of their own organizations, thus creating a ring of T-shaped organizations. T-shaped management is defined as “people who simultaneously deliver results in their own job (the vertical part of the ‘T’) and deliver results by collaborating across the company (the horizontal part of the ‘T’)” (Hansen, 2009, pp. 95-96). This framework can be applied at the organizational level. Figure 3 illustrates what this might look like. The coalition itself, the ring at the top, is also likely to have its own structure that evolves as the process emerges, as illustrated in Figure 4. This is just one example, developed by the consulting firm FSG, of how the coalition or steering committee might be structured.

Figure 4 also presents a new structure, what is referred to as the “backbone support organization” in the Collective Impact model (Kania & Kramer, 2011). This support organization is unlikely to exist in a single organization change effort, specifically because the function of the support organization is to coordinate and facilitate work amongst the partner organizations involved in the effort. The support organization can be structured in a variety of ways: it can be based within a funding organization, created as a new nonprofit, based within an existing nonprofit, established within a governmental organization, shared across multiple organizations, or driven by the steering committee (Hanleybrown, Kania, & Kramer, 2012). It may be dismantled at the end of the project, if it has an endpoint, or continue to provide support to an ongoing effort. Nevertheless, as noted earlier, those leading and implementing the change cannot add the responsibilities of a support organization to an already demanding schedule and be expected to carry out their normal duties. Therefore, a support organization is essential to the success of a multi-sector transformational change project.
Lack of History

One of the factors determining the success of a change effort is its history and track record with past change efforts (Ackerman Anderson & Anderson, 2001). Another advantage of multi-sector transformational change is that it has no history—the likelihood is that this is the first time these organizations are coming together to work collectively on a project. Consequently, participants in multi-sector transformational change are less likely to go through the same emotional reaction to the change, in part because the change is more about changing the larger system rather than the individual organizations. If any individual organization feels the change is a threat to their existence or current structure, they are less likely to participate in the first place, and because a shared vision has yet to be created and the path forward is unknown, participants have less of an emotional attachment to the coalition and no history yet with the change effort. It is possible that as the path forward emerges, participants might then perceive a threat and begin to experience the anxiety that is often associated with change. At that time, it will be important for coalition leaders to support participants as they work through their anxiety.

Another advantage, at least in part, of lacking a history is that participants do not have past behaviors to which they can return, specifically because they have not worked together before. On the other hand, they do bring their own behavior and assumptions to the work and will need to work together to change their behaviors, if they prove ineffective, and challenge their assumptions, if they do not serve the larger purpose. Furthermore, while the individual participants may have no patterns of past behavior with each other, there may still exist some challenging relationships between organizations that will influence the process. Nevertheless, the coalition has an excellent opportunity to be intentional about the relationships they foster, which can set a strong foundation for the work ahead.

Conclusion

The differences between single organization change and multi-sector change are vast. In multi-sector transformational change, the scope of the work is much broader, the complexity of the work is immense, leadership is more challenging, the discovery phase and overall project timeframe are much longer, and the structures required for successful implementation are multifaceted. The coalitions’ leaders must intentionally develop relationships and co-create the required structures to support the change effort and the design for implementing the change. All these differences mean that approaches developed for the corporate sector and employed in single organizations are of questionable value when it comes to multi-sector work.

Research and literature in multi-sector...
transformational change are limited, and models are still being developed and do not have a long history of success. There are numerous opportunities for research in this growing field. It is a field ripe with potential and possibilities, as well as offering hope that we can aspire to more resilient communities.

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“After socio-economic consulting for the last 6 years, we realized that the method alone is not the key, it is the way the method is implemented. The implementation is the key to success of any initiative, be it a change effort or strategic planning.”

Escaping the Tower of Babble
Implementing Organizational Change

By John Conbere and Alla Heorhiadi

All know the way; few actually walk it.
—Bodhidharma

Between the saying and doing many pairs of shoes are worn out.
—Italian proverb

For the last decade or so, there have been debates about the failure of organizational change and business initiatives. The opinions differ. Some claim that somewhere between 60% and 90% of change efforts and business initiatives fail (Raelin & Cataldo, 2011; Oakland & Tanner, 2007). Others argue that this is the myth that does not live up to testing (Leeman, 2014). As researchers, we agree that before measuring failure or success of any initiative, one should agree first on a definition of what the failure and/or success entails. Perhaps all those numbers come from measuring apples and oranges and combining them as fruit. Whatever the number of failed efforts and initiatives are, as practitioners we have seen in our consulting practice some things that lead to failed initiatives. Observing and exploring these examples helped expand our understanding of reasons behind failures, which has become our recent research focus.

Numerous business articles, books, and online blogs have been written that describe six, ten, or many “Main reasons” why strategic plans or change initiatives fail. Most of those reasons are common sense, at least for practitioners who work in organization development and change management. In no way do we want to compete with those articles and pretend that we have discovered some silver bullet. On the contrary, in this article, we try to show how the most common things that everyone knows and experiences continue to prevent many organizations from succeeding in implementing and sustaining change.

Being OD practitioners by training, we have been working with the Socio-Economic Approach to Management (SEAM) for the last decade, and SEAM became the lens through which we view organizations, management, and consulting. We want to be clear upfront that there are other successful consulting and management approaches to increase organizational effectiveness. However, we want to disclose our lens and framework that we use in working with organizations, so the reader can understand our point better. We do believe that all successful approaches will have the same core principles, thus it does not matter which approach is used if it is implemented well.

We have written about the Socio-Economic Approach to Management before (see Conbere & Heorhiadi, 2011; Conbere & Heorhiadi, 2015) and do not want to repeat ourselves. However, for those who hear about SEAM for the first time, and to save the readers’ time on digging out the previous articles, we will mention some important concepts that are pertinent to the point we want to convey.

Henri Savall and his colleagues in Lyon, France, developed the Socio-Economic Approach to Management in response to management practices that did not work effectively. Based on 42 years
of applied research, the French concluded that most managers operate from a flawed mental model of management. This flawed mental model is a set of beliefs and assumptions about the natures of humans, work, workplace, and management, all of which (assumptions) have descended from the teachings of Frederick Taylor, Henri Fayol, and Max Weber. (For more on the flawed mental model see Heorhiadi, Conbere, & Hazeltaker, 2014). Therefore, the intention of SEAM is to change the way people manage organizations.

In our earlier writing, we made a statement that SEAM is one of the most highly successful methods to improve organizational effectiveness. We provided the numbers to prove this—out of 1835 interventions in the last 42 years only 2 failed (Henri Savall, personal communication, October 14, 2016). We credited the method for its effectiveness, systemic approach, organic, and sustainable culture change process (Conbere & Heorhiadi, 2015). After socio-economic consulting for the last 6 years, we realized that the method alone is not the key, it is the way the method is implemented. The implementation is the key to success of any initiative, be it a change effort or strategic planning. So, when people talk about failure of initiatives, what they usually talk about is failure of implementation. Thus, let us explore reasons why implementation may fail, and how to create a structure for successful implementation and sustaining change.

Leaders’ Ideas are not Translated into Strategy

The first problem of failed implementation is when top leaders cannot translate ideas into strategy. The leaders have a great idea of an initiative and they talk about it a lot, yet the initiative remains to live at the level of ideas. There are several possible causes for the leaders’ inability to transform ideas into strategy.

Inability to focus. The result of inability to translate thoughts into action is babble, ongoing talk about improvement that never leads to any outcomes. We call a dysfunctional organization a Tower of “Babble” (pun intended) for two reasons. One is that people at different organizational levels rarely talk the same language and have a different understanding about organizational mission, strategy, and tactics. Second, is that a lot of energy is spent on talking. This is ironic because to our question about the biggest problem in the organizations, employees often respond that there is not enough communication. So, people talk a lot, but they neither hear, nor act. As in the old saying about railroad locomotives, all the steam goes into the whistle. None of the steam produces movement.

Inability to make decisions effectively. One of the signs of effective leadership teams is the ability to make sound decisions based on data in a timely manner. Yet, in some leadership teams, the members are not able to disagree; the members fear the leader or others in the group, so hold back their thoughts. As result, the business discussions in those groups turn into a politically correct dance without talking about the real issues. We worked with one executive group, in which the CEO dominated every meeting and was notorious for retaliating against anyone who did not agree with him. As a result, the group learned to defer to the CEO, watched carefully for his opinions and reactions, and withheld any information that would displeased him. Therefore, the CEO never had full and accurate information about what was happening in the organization. The team members had to talk in private about what was troublesome or important and often tried to filter any information for the leader in order not to upset him.

In some leadership teams, even if the members could talk about the real issues, they simply could not make sound decisions in a timely manner. We have seen teams of good, caring, smart leaders, who talked, and talked, and talked, but were not able to reach actual decisions. When we asked them why this happens, the leaders had different excuses, such as the need to collect more information or test the ideas, fear to make the wrong decision, or desire to make a perfect decision. Yet the perfect decision is the one that is made with all the information available at the time and communicated in a timely manner to everyone involved in the decision. As time goes by, the decision should be revisited and adjusted if needed, based on new information.

Not knowing or ignoring the difference of personal styles may also lead to poor decision making. We worked with teams, in which the leader, who was highly “Perceiving” in the Myers-Briggs typology, preferred gathering ideas rather than making decisions, and so was continually tempted to wait for more information. While collecting more information to make a sound decision is not a problem in itself, it may be very frustrating for those who are ready to decide. Inability to decide in a timely manner, or at least talk openly.
about this issue, may lead to the loss of a momentum needed for implementation.

Too many initiatives. Another reason for leaders’ inability to translate ideas into strategy is that other tasks often overwhelm them. These leaders have been caught by “Magical Thinking,” the delusional belief that they can keep adding tasks to their work-to-do lists without lowering the quality of their work (Conbere & Heorhiadi, 2016). There are different causes and forms of magical thinking, but being unrealistic about the relationship between time and work amount is one of the most common workplace problems we see, which inevitably leads to hidden costs.

Strategy is not Translated into Effective Action

When leaders manage to translate their ideas into strategy, there are still several barriers to successful implementation, at both top and middle management levels.

Not enough time for implementation. Even the best initiative needs enough time to be properly implemented. It is similar to planting a seed—the seed needs to root, sprout, and grow to be a viable plant. SEAM research shows that (a) the first significant improvements and results can be achieved within the first three months of the intervention, (b) the major sustainable changes in culture and reduction of hidden costs are beginning to be achieved by the end of the first year, and (c) the changes strengthen steadily over time. Each year, the organization’s return on investment grows. This time line is in accord with Likert’s research on implementing participative management. (See Figure 3. How the shift toward System 4 management improves performance and reduces costs, in The Human Organization, 1967, p. 92). Likert’s point was that implementation of participative management (as the most effective type of management) would produce the best results after 3 years, but many organizations gave up before that time. Most organizations are not patient and tend to be short-term oriented.

Failure to give clear instructions. Sometimes leaders are not able to give clear instructions to those who are supposed to implement the plan, usually the middle managers. Talking about an idea is different from giving instructions about its implementation. Talking and giving instructions can be compared to a reading light and laser. Talking may serve a purpose of crystalizing ideas, socializing, venting, processing, etc. Giving directions implies a purpose, audience, and the need to complete a task in a timely manner.

We spoke to one person who complained, “I get this email from my boss who says I have to implement [an initiative], but I have no idea how to do this, and I do not know whom to ask.” Even a clear instruction may be misunderstood due to various reasons, and that can weaken implementation. Yet, when there are no instructions, there is a high probability that the implementation fails.

Not enough authority. Sometimes implementation is impaired because the person, who is supposed to lead the implementation, does not have the authority to act. This might be due to micro-management from a higher leader, or it might simply be that nobody thought through what kind of authority the person in charge of implementation needs. We have seen many examples of asking people to complete tasks without giving them proper authority to do so. For example, recently we spoke with a newly appointed project manager, who was supposed to manage numerous projects without any authority over the people who worked on the projects. He could not bring the necessary people together, nor keep people accountable for failing to meet the project deadlines. For successful implementation, the person in charge needs authority to bring people together, make decisions, and get the desired changes to take root.

Not having managerial skills. Over the years, we have seen a common problem, which is promoting people to management roles without training them how to supervise employees. These newly promoted managers do not know how to manage, nor do they invest enough time in their new role. In many organizations, supervision is just an add-on task without changing expectations about continuing to do the work that the person had been doing. Often there is more incentive to be good at technical tasks than to be a good manager. The result is managers who do not know how to organize and guide people who report to them. Because of lack of training, such managers may not know how to design tactical steps needed to implement the initiative. When managers are unable to plan, and then to steer their department, they cannot successfully implement any initiatives.

Being overwhelmed. Like top leaders, many mid-level managers and supervisors are overwhelmed by work, although being overwhelmed for them may take more severe forms. Some of overwork is a result of their magical thinking and loyalty to the boss or organization. Sometimes, they are overwhelmed due to dysfunctions in their organization. New tasks are being continuously delegated to the mid-level managers and supervisors from top levels of the organization. Or, people leave the organization and are not replaced and the managers and supervisors add to their own workload the tasks of those who left. We see more and more employees who do two or three jobs. As one supervisor said, “They keep adding more tasks to my plate and when I complain · they say, ‘Work smarter not harder.’ Now I am doing also a job of someone who was laid off. This is a pattern in our organization. They lay off people and then redistribute their work among us.” These people are at the end of their rope, already failing to do the work they know is needed. So, when implementing a new initiative is added to their plate, and nothing is taken away, there is no time nor energy to work on a new initiative.

In addition to the outcomes of failed initiatives, reduced morale and employee engagement, too much overwork can lead to burnout, which can cause significant emotional and physical damage to the person, and tremendous cost to the organization. As an example, in working with a rural healthcare organization, we
estimated that when a physician burns out, the hidden cost (lost revenue and expenses for replacing the physician) is between $500,000 and $1,000,000.

Failure scenarios. Whatever the cause of the failure to implement a new initiative, there are two possible unfortunate outcomes. One possible outcome is the initiative dies after trying to pave its path through the tangle of organizational dysfunctions. Along the way, the initiative creates havoc in people’s busy lives, adds stress, and leads to more dysfunctions and hidden costs. The resources used during the short life span of the idea turn into hidden costs in the form of wasted time, wasted money, missed productivity and reduced morale. The lost time and money could have been used more effectively in the areas that needed them most. People may gossip a bit about inept leadership and move on with their daily tasks. The leadership group shifts their attention to a new shiny object. The status quo, however dysfunctional, is restored for the time being, until the vicious cycle begins again.

Another form of failure is when the initiative does get implemented, but the results are not what the organization originally intended to achieve. This often happens when the initiative is treated as a stand-alone event, and not as a part of a larger organizational system. Over and over, we see situations when the implementation of the initiative in one organizational silo does not consider possible consequences in another silo, or the whole organization, which leads to more hidden costs. We call this approach a “Peep-hole vision.” Imagine looking through an old-fashioned peep hole after somebody rang a door bell. Recollect how distorted the person behind the door looks, and how little perspective is available when looking out. Many organizations have this limited view of how a new initiative interrelates and interacts with other organizational elements, such as vision, mission, and strategic directions.

Here is an example of a peep-hole vision. A college decided to recruit more international students. The marketing department received the task of producing a new marketing campaign to attract an international population. Several recruiters were sent abroad, mostly to countries of Eastern Europe, Asia, and the Middle East to recruit students. The college leaders were excited when more international students began to enroll. Initially, it looked like the college successfully implemented the strategic initiative of being international. Then some problems started popping up. The college, looking at the initiative through a peep-hole, did not recognize the need to provide a structure to support the implementation of the idea. Among the new international student population, there were many Muslim students, who needed prayer rooms, pre-prayer ablution facilities, and even instructors who could understand the different cultural assumptions and values of the new student population. Muslim students tried to resolve their needs on their own by using classrooms as the prayer rooms, washing feet before prayers in sinks and toilet bowls, and leaving class sessions at the hour of prayer, all of which caused frustration for other students and faculty. Conflict was escalated when some Muslim students went home and spread the word of mouth to not apply to the college. The college began to lose its international student population. This example illustrates the importance of looking at any initiative not as a single event, but something that should be integrated into the whole system, and then to be supported and maintained by the whole system.

What Structures are Needed for Implementing Change?

Because we work with SEAM, we will use examples from our SEAM practice. However, as we said earlier, other consulting methods can provide similar structures. The SEAM method is three-fold: the change intervention, teaching managers to use the socio-economic management tools, and coaching managers through the change efforts. All of these together set the structure for successful implementation of changes and are designed to sustain themselves, so that when consultants leave, the organizations do not slip back into old ways of operating.

The SEAM intervention. The SEAM intervention is rigorous, data-driven and theory-based. It is designed to reduce organizational dysfunctions and hidden costs associated with them, and increase human potential and engagement. The SEAM intervention begins with the leadership group, and then cascades down through all silos through the organization. In each group, employees are interviewed about which functions are not working as well as they might, or dysfunctions. The dysfunctions are categorized, and the amount of hidden costs associated with the dysfunctions are calculated. Analysis of the data helps identify the root causes of the dysfunctions, which serves as a starting point for suggesting areas of improvement and possible projects. The information is reported to all employees in each silo. Members of all levels of the organization are invited to take on projects, which results in improved operations and reduced hidden costs. (For more on the SEAM intervention process see Conbere & Heorhiadi, 2011; Conbere & Heorhiadi, 2015).

The process of an intervention is designed to provide leaders in every silo with accurate information of what is not working well, and how much time and money the organization loses as a result. SEAM is good in gathering data from all levels of the organization, synthesizing data into specific categories, attaching a dollar amount to dysfunctions (hidden costs), and identifying the root causes of dysfunctions. Hidden costs information (which can range between $20,000 and $80,000 per employee per year) provide clear indicators of where the most effective change efforts will have the most lasting impact.

Tools. The socio-economic management tools provide a disciplined way to successfully implement change. The tools do not seem unique to anyone who has any business education. What is different about them is that they do not have a punitive feel. They serve as data gathering and negotiation tools. The thing that
originally attracted us to SEAM that we keep reinforcing in our work and teaching, is that SEAM does not blame people, it focuses only on changing the system. Thus, all socio-economic tools, if used correctly, help to redirect the focus of intervention from people’s fault to problems within the system. At first, people tend to be skeptical about tools, they may be even timid and assume that the tools will be used to reduce their freedom or, even worse, to jeopardize their work. However, later, when they discover all the benefits of the tools, they realize how their life gets saner. The use of these management tools helps to rebuild a healthier and more effective system.

The Internal-External Strategic Plan is usually designed for three years and it deliberately sets out two categories for the planning. The internal goals are to reduce dysfunctions, making the organization healthier. The reduction of hidden costs (both wasted time and wasted money) is intended to free up the organization to invest in the external goals—the development of the organization. Having both categories is essential. For instance, in one organization, poor communication across the silos was creating havoc for employees. Improving communication was a necessary goal that needed to be achieved before any development goals were attempted.

The Internal-External Strategic Plan is very organic. It lists all the new activities that an organization is planning to do in the next three years, including internal work on reducing organizational dysfunctions as well as the strategic goals of development: growth, increasing market share and profits, and developing new products. This tool is a good remedy against the shiny object syndrome, as it keeps the organizational focus on initiatives that are listed in the plan. Steps of each element of the plan are divided into six month segments.

The Priority Action Plan is the more detailed document to spell out the strategic goals that are listed in the Internal-External Strategic Plan. The plan is a simple table, in which the manager, the owner of the plan, lists all the priorities, based on strategic goals, in which the manager will be involved for the next six-months. In addition to strategic plan goals and actions to be taken, the table includes the manager’s own normal management tasks, time for emergencies, and vacations. Then the owner of the plan adds up the hours for each month. Most often, people see that they have scheduled more activities than they can possibly do. In the old days, this magical thinking would lead to missed deadlines, work not getting done, and much frustration. With SEAM, the person meets with the manager and negotiates: What are the priorities? What should be dropped or moved to the next six-month period? This negotiation informs both manager and employee, and if necessary the strategic plan time table is amended.

In the end, the Priority Action Plan leads to alignment of all efforts throughout the organization. The CEO makes her Priority Action Plan first and then shares it with each of her direct reports. The direct reports write their Priority Action Plans, negotiate their priorities with the CEO, and share their Priority Action Plans with their reports. Thus, the right priorities cascade down through the organization, creating synergy and keeping everyone focused on the same strategic goals.

Using Priority Action Plans changes the way people plan their work. The shock of seeing the unreasonable number of hours that are needed to do all listed goals triggers a process of internal reassessment. Not only do people see the extent of their magical thinking, they learn to make healthy decisions about tasks and time in collaboration with their managers. We have consulted using other OD approaches, but only in the SEAM process have we seen people collectively begin to behave differently and healthier as a result of intervention.

In using the Time Assessment tool, managers list the tasks they do and the amount of time each takes over a few days. What makes the tool different is the analysis of how time is spent. How much of a manager’s activities is routine management, responding to dysfunctions, or steering one’s direct reports? (By steering we mean leading and managing.) Then there is a section for analyzing how many of the tasks could be delegated, discontinued, or kept as priorities. In working with managers on implementing the time assessment tool, we were told how shocked they were to see the amount of time, spent on dysfunctions, and how little time is spent steering their direct reports. Yet the time of steering is very important, especially when the organization intends to implement initiatives. Aligning people’s efforts to get the intended results from implementing change require a lot of work with employees—explaining, giving instructions, providing feedback, requesting feedback and results. This time assessment tool supports the SEAM theoretical concept that the primary job of a manager is steering, as without steering it is impossible to keep the organization headed in the same direction. This tool is very important when it comes to implementing initiatives. By looking at the use of time, one can see whether there will be enough time for working on a new initiative. If there is not enough time, or a lot of time is spent on dealing with dysfunctions, it is a high probability that a new initiative will be put aside or abandoned.

The Competency Grid is an analysis of all of the competencies that are needed in a department. The tool is a table with two axes. The skills go on one axis of a chart; they include all technical skills, interpersonal skills, supervisory/management skills, and skills needed for future development. The other axis lists all the members of the department. The purpose of the tool is two-fold: (a) to indicate the degree to which each member of the department has mastered each of the skills, and (b) to see the gaps in skills for the whole department. The information about missing skills helps managers to make decisions about hiring the right people, outsourcing the tasks, training employees in needed skills within the department, as well as succession planning.

The tool also helps to plan strategic development of the department. Perhaps not all skills will be needed in the future, so rather than replacing skills (not people), managers try to think what skills will be needed in the future to stay competitive.
Many managers told us that they wish they had filled out a Competency Grid before they made their last hire, because they had not realized the skills they needed at that time. They were hiring a person with good skills, rather than acquiring the skills needed for the department to achieve strategic goals.

How does this tool link to implementation? When implementing an initiative, it is important to think whether an organization has the right competencies to implement and maintain the initiative. In one university, the administration decided to roll out a new automated system. The initiative failed miserably. After diagnosing the problem, the cause of failure became obvious—many users did not know how to properly use computers and nobody trained them in a new system. Had the Competency Grid been used, the need for training would have been obvious. Making computer training a tactical step during the implementation of the new system would have made the implementation successful.

Coaching. Organizational change can be hard, as it upsets the strategic and political environment of the organization. We have been told by many leaders and managers that during the change process they have been extremely appreciative of individual coaching. One aspect of the coaching is helping leaders to deal with the political repercussions from the intervention process. As people engage in reducing dysfunctions and creating a more collaborative workplace, they are inevitably changing “the rules of the game,” i.e., the assumptions that people have about what is and is not acceptable at work. For instance, in an executive leadership team, in which people held back information, for whatever reason, the new rule has become that withholding information is professionally unacceptable. In the organization, where the magical thinking was rampant, now managers and employees negotiate the priorities, and collectively decide what tasks can wait and which cannot. (When we began working with this organizations, these managers were convinced that nothing would change and they could not safely argue with their bosses.) As simple as these changes look, they still require courage, willingness, and support to change old habits. On-going coaching is extremely helpful for getting employees to live up to the new “rules.”

Business Case

To show how these tools work together, we will use one example of organizational dysfunctions from our practice—people being overwhelmed with work. In this organization, most managers and supervisors had more tasks than could be achieved, and they despaired of ever catching up. We were told, “Everyone is trying to work fast, so some things get missed. We work on the surface, which creates issues. We need to decide on what we do not do. But how do we decide on what not to do?” The leadership group was unable to make decisions that lasted, so they wasted a tremendous amount of time by continually revisiting decisions. E-mail had become a crisis, and could eat up 1 to 4 hours a day for managers and supervisors. People recognized that they could not handle any more initiatives. “We have too many initiatives, without supporting, or educating people how to do them. We do not support, we just assign those projects to people.” People became hopeless about ever changing anything; they accepted their fate.

The interventions began with a leadership group and the first step was helping the group to learn how to manage their time. The time assessment tool led leaders to reflect on how much time they spent responding to dysfunctions, and how little time they spent steering the organization. As the leaders developed an internal-external strategic plan, they faced the task of examining priorities that needed their attention for the next three years, as well as estimating how they would use their time over the long term. As a result, some projects had to be delayed—this was a big step towards reversing their magical thinking that they could do everything at once. The priority action plans led to negotiating the realistic time allocated to these priorities for the next six months.

Leaders recognized the need to limit babble about operational issues during their meetings and to focus more on strategic thinking and steering. One project they undertook was to improve their meeting time and decision-making. The group members learned how to facilitate and manage the flow of the meetings and this became part of the solution. During individual coaching, members were encouraged to explore some dysfunctional behaviors and factors that prevented them from being more effective as leaders. The insights from those coaching sessions were shared with the large group in order

Figure 1. Elements of the SEAM process that worked together to reduce the problem of being overwhelmed
to collectively wrestle with the issues and find resolutions.

The problems the leaders tackled were long standing; on numerous occasions in the past years, they tried to implement new ways of working but failed to sustain new behaviors. It is like in the saying above, everyone knew the way, but no one really walked it. Using the SEAM tools helped them become more disciplined. As a result, the leaders altered their priorities, freed themselves from unnecessary tasks, and found time and opportunities for more strategic work. Altogether, having the data about dysfunctions and hidden costs, the deliberate use of tools, and regular coaching helped leaders to develop the new behaviors. The new behaviors were sustained for a longer time, until they became habits. The leaders were able to model and help mid-level managers to do the same. The new way of working started cascading down throughout the organization.

Figure 1 is the visual representation of socio-economic elements that addressed only one problem—being overwhelmed. Similar approaches were undertaken to deal with every cost-intensive problem, identified during the diagnostic stage of the intervention.

Conclusion

There are many causes of failed initiatives and only a few basic principles of successful implementation. While we used SEAM as a lens to look at one method for implementing organizational change, there are other ways to implement change successfully. We believe the underlying principles of all successful implementation processes are the same.

First, for an initiative or organizational change effort to be sustained, the implementation needs to include consideration of the impact on the whole system. If an initiative is implemented only in one silo, the other silos will have to support or maintain the change. This means that for successful implementation, the support structures have to be built throughout the whole system, regardless of what part of the system in which the initiative takes roots. By the support structure for implementation we mean procedures, polices, training, and feedback loops.

Second, every implementation needs to be grounded in sound data. The data should come from all levels of the organization to provide a holistic picture of the state of things. The data should include not only official numbers on financial sheets and other formal records, but also hidden costs that often are ignored by traditional accounting. Usually the hidden costs give a better picture of where implementation may stumble.

Third, implementing a serious change in an organization often involves changing managers’ behaviors, which may include changing their mental model of what management entails. The primary task of managers is steering (getting all people and departments aligned) and setting the strategic direction for the organization. To set strategic direction and steer employees towards the strategic goals successfully, managers need to learn how to manage their time effectively.

And the common denominator for all the above is time. Time is needed to think through the details of implementing the change, to collect the right information, to train people and change their behavior. Giving a serious change initiative enough time to take root is essential. We suggest three years ought to be the norm for a time frame for making serious organizational changes. Referring to the Italian proverb above, between the idea and its implementation many pairs of shoes will be worn out.

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Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.  
—Soren Kierkegaard

It is an uncanny paradox that the very issue that occupies so much of physicians’ attention over their careers—getting their career right and crafting the ideal professional life—has received so little written attention. The reasons for this gap between interest and attention likely reflect several factors: the topic is “soft,” i.e. the ideal career falls outside the usual bounds of evidence-based medicine; and the issue is highly personal, i.e. my ideal career could be your anathema. Still, because the issue is pressing, it has prompted much personal reflection and discussion with colleagues, which inform this paper.

In addressing how to craft the dream career in medicine, we begin by framing the issue. What are the rates and drivers of physician satisfaction and, conversely, what are the rates at which physicians change jobs? What are the drivers of dissatisfaction? A taxonomy of career states seems useful and is followed by a discussion of the personal attributes and features deemed needed to achieve a dream career. Finally, we conclude by discussing the resources that are needed to realize a dream career.

The Context: Rates of Physician Turnover and Drivers of Physician Satisfaction

The issues of physician turnover and drivers of satisfaction are especially topical because physician burnout is a central issue in American healthcare today (Peckham, 2016). Surveys suggest that the prevalence of dissatisfaction among American physicians is generally high (Figure 1), especially in some specialties (e.g., critical care, urology, and emergency room medicine). Moreover, the rates and drivers of physician turnover have been reviewed with annual rates of physician turnover ranging from 3.9% to 25% (Table 1) and varying by specialty and practice type (Misra-Hebert et al., 2004; Scheurer et al., 2009). Factors associated with turnover include: professional conflict, practice features, and lack of control over work schedule. Further, in a meta-analysis of 97 studies of physician satisfaction, Scheurer et al. (2009) observed that extrinsic factors that were strong satisfiers included: colleague support, income and incentive, and work control.

Differing career states have suggested a taxonomy (Brosco & Obrien, 2011):
1. Happy incumbent (“I want to be the best at what I do now”).
2. Current job as springboard (“I am preparing myself to be the next chairperson”).
3. Uncertain about the long-term (“I am not sure what direction I want to head in”).
4. Unhappy, uncertain incumbent (“I am unhappy in my current role but am unsure about what to do about it”).

Personal Attributes of the Satisfied Physician

Features of a dream career in medicine beg the question: What events shape the dream career? What are the personal attributes
Ensuring alignment between personal and organizational values; optimizing self-awareness; developing resilience; embracing change; acknowledging serendipity; and cultivating strong relationships. Each of these is discussed below. In doing so, it bears mention that although these six conditions and attributes are discussed in the specific context of a career in medicine, we suggest that these features associated with a dream career are generalizable to organizational careers in other sectors. While the specifics may vary by sector, it seems equally important that engineers, bus drivers, factory workers, and lawyers achieve alignment, have resilience, embrace change, etc. in order to achieve satisfying, ideal careers.

Ensuring Alignment

Alignment between personal values and those of the organization you join is most crucial to both professional contentment and to role longevity. To probe one’s alignment, ask:

- Is the contribution I want to make and that I can make what matters to the organization?
- How will my performance be assessed and do the parameters on which I will be evaluated represent my deep strengths and interests?

Environments which offer a spectrum of roles offer both the greatest opportunity for alignment but also the greatest risk for misalignment. Consider the case of an academic medical center where the tripartite mission of clinical care, research, and education is served. In joining such an organization, it is essential to be clear about which part(s) of the mission you will support and how your time will be allocated in support of that mission. How your time is allocated is a clear reflection of the priorities that define your role. For example, the superb clinician who loves to provide care and who does so in high volume and quality will be valued in settings and roles
that celebrate clinical care and will have a schedule that allocates most of the time to clinical service. Similarly, the superb investigator whose ideas consistently garner extramural support will be celebrated for research contributions. The schedule for this individual will characteristically reflect less structured obligations, with the expectation that success will depend on using the time to productively advance one’s research, reporting results, and seeking continued funding.

In contrast, misalignment occurs when one’s time allocation is at odds with one’s talent and passion. The pure clinician who seeks long-term freedom from clinical service to do research is at risk. Similarly, the investigator whose work does not attract funding will experience pressure to contribute with clinical service. Thus, time that is available for research is

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Rate of Turnover</th>
<th>Practice Type</th>
<th>Factors Associated with Turnover</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group practices</td>
<td>3.9% mean for 4</td>
<td>Group practice clinics</td>
<td>Professional, financial, administrative, personal</td>
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<tr>
<td>McHardy (1958)</td>
<td>years</td>
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<td>Friedson (1961)</td>
<td>25% annual</td>
<td>Prepaid group practice</td>
<td>NR</td>
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<td>Ross (1969)</td>
<td>3.6–4.7% annual</td>
<td>Group practice</td>
<td>Professional conflict, economics, practice arrangement, personal</td>
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<td>for 3 years</td>
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<td>Vayda (1970)</td>
<td>Annual average</td>
<td>Prepaid medical care program</td>
<td>Locality, specialty, time since joining group</td>
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<td>13%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prybil (1971)</td>
<td>&lt;5% annual</td>
<td>Large multispecialty groups</td>
<td>Economic factors, medical practice factors, organizational factors</td>
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<td>Konrad et al. (1976)</td>
<td>8.6–10% annual</td>
<td>Multispecialty group practices</td>
<td>Seasonal variation</td>
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<td>Primary Care Physicians</td>
<td>Annual average</td>
<td>New England prepaid group practices (PCP)</td>
<td>Physician satisfaction, potential for more autonomy, previous experience in fee-for-service settings</td>
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<td>Mick et al. (1983)</td>
<td>3.9–6.3%</td>
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<td>Kerstein et al. (1994)</td>
<td>Not reported in</td>
<td>HMO (PCP)</td>
<td>Large % HMO patients, compensation factors, market variables</td>
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<td>this study</td>
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<tr>
<td>Buchbinder et al. (2001)</td>
<td>55% left 1 practice</td>
<td>PCP &lt;45-years old, not federally employed; post residency</td>
<td>Indicated on survey responses that “very likely to leave” 2 years (RR 2.38, CI 1.96-2.88) [RR-relative risk; CI-confidence interval]</td>
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curtailed and a cycle of professional discontentment due to misalignment between aspirations and organizational expectations can develop.

Ensuring alignment requires awareness of what the organization values, what one’s role requires, and self-awareness and candor regarding one’s own strengths and weaknesses. As such, alignment depends on being self-aware.

**Optimizing Self-Awareness**

The degree to which one is self-aware can be framed by the Johari Window (Figure 2) (Luft & Ingham, 1955). In this construct, things about oneself of which one is both aware and unaware are compared to characteristics and behaviors that others see in you. In the left upper quadrant—the open or public arena—things you recognize about yourself are concordant with things about you that others see and experience. In contrast, the right upper quadrant represents one’s blind spot—things about you that others clearly recognize but which are hidden to you. The self-aware individual will have a small blind spot, with the gap between one’s self-perception and others’ perception narrowed by seeking feedback in service of making one’s “real self” evolve into one’s “ideal self” (Boyatzis, 2008). In contrast, lack of self-awareness will cause one to consistently miss clues and signals of misalignment. The adage that “one is hired on one’s competencies and fired on one’s personality” (Kay, personal communication) summarizes the undesirable but all too common result of lacking self-awareness. Low self-reflective ability can be evident at the earliest stages of a medical career and has been associated with lapses in professionalism in medical school (Hoffman et al., 2016).

Successful careers also require that doctors balance humility and self-advocacy. A quote from Rabbi Hillel captures the needed balance: “If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am not for others, what am I? And if not now, when?” Finding this balance can be especially difficult for doctors because clinical training and the process of clinical decision-making encourages “yes/no” or dichotomous thinking—doctors make “yes/no” decisions about continuous biologic variables. For example, we may treat hypertension when the systolic blood pressure—a continuous variable—is 143 mmHg but not when it is 138 mmHg. As useful as dichotomous thinking is for clinical practice, this same “either/or” thinking may limit us as we think about ourselves and our organizations. Physicians may fall prey to what Collins and Porras (2008) have termed “the tyranny of the OR” and may be blinded to the “genius of the AND.” When we embrace “AND” thinking, we can be both humble and we can still advocate for ourselves. F. Scott Fitzgerald reminds us that “The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function” (1936).

**Developing Resilience**

It is striking that for executives in business, “setbacks and tough times” are widely cited as shaping careers (McCall et al., 1988). Navigating tough times requires resilience, sometimes defined as the “staunch acceptance of reality, the deep belief that life is meaningful, and the uncanny ability to improvise” (Coutu, 2002, p. 48). Being resilient means having an important component of positive psychological capital (Luthans et al., 2007). When we are in a positive psychological state, we have:

1. confidence to “take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks;”
2. optimism about succeeding now and in the future;
3. hope, i.e. we “persevere toward goals and, when necessary, redirect paths to goals in order to succeed;” and
4. resilience, i.e. “when beset by problems and adversity, we sustain and bounce back and even beyond to succeed.”

Having positive psychological capital—perhaps especially resilience given the duration and stresses of a medical career—is associated with enhanced career performance.

While sources of resilience include the work one does, the organization one serves, and the relationships one has, resilience is most frequently identified as coming from within (Coutu, 2002). Indeed, in a survey of 815 British employees regarding the source of their resilience, more than 90% of resilience was regarded as “coming from myself” (Coutu, 2002).

Experienced physicians employ a variety of resilience strategies as catalogued by Zwack and Schweitzer (2013) in a survey of 200 German surgeons, general practitioners, and psychiatrists. Such strategies included a habit of self-reflection,
engagement with professional colleagues on professional matters (e.g., sharing cases, ongoing learning), owning one’s errors and professional limitations, being clear about personal principles and priorities, being committed to ongoing medical education and staying current, having the ability to “self-demarcate” as an example of emotional intelligence (McCall et al., 1988), committing to professionalism, having a passion for leisure activities and successful change agency have been proposed, such as the “Eight Stages of Change Model” by Kotter (1996) and, in medicine, the “Amicus” model by Kornacki and Silversin (2000). While a detailed discussion of these models is beyond the scope of this paper, one critical point is that involving physicians in change efforts early is a critical success factor for effecting change in healthcare.

Attitudes that were deemed useful to preserve resilience included acceptance and realism, self-awareness, accepting personal boundaries, “creating inner distance by taking an observer perspective,” appreciating the good things, having interest in one’s patients beyond their symptoms, and recognizing and embracing change. The acknowledgement of change and its acceptance with enthusiasm represent another personal attribute associated with a dream career.

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Other Attributes Associated with a Dream Career

Remaining attributes associated with a successful career include: recognizing the role of serendipity, adroitness in exploring opportunities that serendipity presents, and cultivating nurturing relationships. Serendipity is an ever-present feature of medical careers. Indeed, it is virtually universally true that life events and/or pursuing unplanned and unanticipated opportunities changes the course of medical careers. Consider the urologist whose chronic back pain caused him to consider assuming some administrative opportunities, leading to an MBA, and culminating in his serving as a hospital Chief of Staff. Still, serendipity must be in balance with intentionality. Specifically, it is sensible at every stage of one’s career to have a working hypothesis about one’s desired near and long-term direction and goals. At the same time, events occur and opportunities present that may challenge the orderly trajectory of those plans. Self-awareness and careful analysis of serendipitous events (e.g., invitations to serve in new roles, etc.) will enhance the likelihood that serendipitous events can have a favorable impact.

Developing Relationships

Relationships and mentorship—both mentoring and being mentored—are critical elements of successful careers and have received ample attention (Taylor et al., 2009). Every colleague we know recounts gratitude to one or more senior colleagues for the beneficent influence they exerted. A meta-analysis of mentoring in academic medicine (Caruso et al., 2016; Sambunjak et al., 2006) confirms this impression that mentors exert important influence on careers. Yet surprisingly, as of 2006, only a minority of sampled faculty reported having mentors (Sambunjak et al., 2006).

When physicians seek mentors, they characteristically identify multiple mentors, each for a different career dimension. Indeed, an interview-based study of established and aspiring physician-leaders regarding their mentorship experience (Taylor et al., 2009) offered two conclusions: First, mentorship in medicine is a series of strategic interactions, i.e., there are indeed different mentors for different issues. One colleague related having a mentor to help develop clinical skills, a second mentor to help navigate the environment of academic medicine, and a third mentor to advise regarding the interface between life and career. The second observation from the interviews was that the most important contribution of the mentor is to provide emotional and psychological support.

In keeping with the increasingly recognized importance of mentorship (Caruso et al., 2006) for optimizing self-awareness, resilience, and developing relationships, academic programs are increasingly developing formal mentoring and coaching programs that match colleagues based on appropriate fit. For example, at the Cleveland Clinic, a professional Staff Coaching and Mentoring Program (SCMP) was created in 2008 in response to the faculty’s request for formalized mentorship. The mission of the SCMP is to facilitate a coaching and mentoring network for acknowledging and embracing change.

A Perspective on Crafting a Dream Medical Career
Importantly, the SCMP supports the aforementioned principles of helping participants to craft a dream career. Specifically, one of the first steps in the program’s coach training is teaching the importance of ensuring that an individual’s values are aligned with his/her goals. Coaching encourages self-awareness through careful listening for both the spoken and unspoken (i.e. emotions, strengths, values), followed by thought-provoking questions that clarify and challenge perspectives. Program outcomes suggest that coaches, coachees, mentors, and mentees all report significant increases in developing components of resilience, which includes the ability to embrace change. Perhaps the most valuable feature of the SCMP is the described benefit of networking and cultivating new relationships with colleagues, which in and of itself promotes resilience.

The importance of coaching and mentorship invites the question of whether the traits associated with a dream career are innate or capable of being learned. While individuals vary in the extent to which they may demonstrate these traits, the weight of evidence suggests that, like emotional intelligence in general (Goleman, 1996), these traits can be learned and enhanced. One model that summarizes how to learn these traits is the Theory of Intentional Change by Boyatzis (2006). In this model, the discovery of one’s real self—“who am I really?”—is compared with the vision of one’s ideal self—“who do I want to be?” Both the appreciation of one’s real self and the movement toward one’s ideal self require the input of supportive relationships which are committed to helping build strengths and reduce gaps. Coaches and mentors can certainly serve as one of the sources of these committed relationships.

Complementing this formal mentoring and coaching program for faculty at our institution is an annual 2-day leadership development workshop for chief residents at Cleveland Clinic (Farver et al., 2016). The curriculum includes a session which engages the chief residents regarding crafting an ideal career—the elements of an ideal career, the requirements to achieve such a career, and a discussion of the aforementioned attributes and conditions.

In summary, because having a dream career in medicine commands so much of physicians’ attention and is so coveted, my hope is that these observations will provide guidance to ensure achieving the ideal career. Mindfulness to help develop the needed attributes should help. Recall that although our focus here has been on a career in medicine, these principles surely apply broadly to organizational careers beyond medicine.

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James K. Stoller, MD, MS, is a pulmonary/critical care physician at the Cleveland Clinic. He holds the Jean Wall Bennett Professorship and the Samson Global Leadership Academy Endowed Chair at the Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine and serves as the Chairman of the Cleveland Clinic Education Institute. Stoller holds a master in organizational development and serves as adjunct Professor of Organizational Behavior at the Weatherhead School of Management of Case Western Reserve University. Stoller can be reached at STOLLEJ@ccf.org.

Andrea Sikon, MD, FACP, is the Chair of the Department of Internal Medicine and Geriatrics at Cleveland Clinic. Sikon has her graduate certificate in executive and professional coaching and is co-director of the Cleveland Clinic’s Center for Excellence in Coaching and Mentoring since its inception in 2008. With over 300 participants, the Center’s mission is to facilitate a developmental network for all faculty across the career continuum, with growing outcomes supporting increased physician and PhD participant resilience and engagement. She can be reached at SIKONA@ccf.org.

Elaine Schulte, MD, MPH, FAA, is a Professor of Pediatrics at the Cleveland Clinic Lerner School of Medicine and a practicing physician at Cleveland Clinic Children’s Hospital. She has her coaching certificate through the Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University. Schulte can be reached at schulte@ccf.org.
At its core the practice of Organization Development (OD) is about individual and organizational change. If we follow the original theories that underpin much of the field today (e.g., Argyris, 1964; Lewin, 1959; Schein, 1969), OD can be summarized as a process of growing and developing through some form of data whether qualitative or quantitate (Waclawski & Church, 2002). The basic flow is one we are all familiar with, i.e., entry, contracting, diagnosis, feedback, intervention, and evaluation (Burke, 1982; Nadler, 1977). This results in the classic situation of creating dissatisfaction with the present state and some guidance or direction toward a desired future (Beckhard & Harris, 1977). Today after many years of dialogue in the field (e.g., Burke, 1982; Church, 2001; Gottlieb, 1998; Goodstein, 1984; Friedlander, 1976; Margulies & Raia, 1990), the debate appears to be over and change in this context is meant to be in the form of both humanistic growth of the person as well as some improvement in overall effectiveness or other organizational impact (Shull, Church, & Burke, 2014). While newer forms of theory and practice such as dialogic OD (Bushe & Marshak, 2015) take a different approach to the structure of the change process, in the end the goal of providing individuals with new perspectives through inquiry, enhancing self-awareness and learning, and increasing effectiveness are consistent.

The rise of talent management (TM) as a practice area and the use of feedback tools for more assessment and decision-making purposes, however, has changed the landscape somewhat in which many OD professionals are operating (Church, 2013a; 2014). Today the dual purpose of development and decision-making is the dominant paradigm in organizational settings as recent research with top development companies has shown. Church and Rotolo (2013) for example reported that 70% of their sample of 84 large global companies are actively using multiple psychometric tools to assess leaders (both executives and early career professionals), and the vast majority were using these for development and decision-making purposes. In a second study two years later, Church, Rotolo, Ginther, and Levine (2015) reported that the greater the maturity level of the talent management programs in a similar group of 80 top development companies, the more likely they were to use integrated assessments as part of the process. The days of “development only” feedback tools, such as was the case with 360 feedback in the 1990s when it first emerged, are gone.

What this means is that OD practitioners need to become more accustomed to and adept at designing talent assessment and development systems and delivering feedback in more rigorous ways. If the data is to be used for placement or selection into high-potential leadership pools or programs there is a higher standard of validity that must be met to be both legally defensible for the organization and morally defensible for the development of those participating. What this also means, however, is that the level of anxiety associated with such tools is increased as well. While...
there were concerns over 360 feedback or personality data being misused in the past (e.g., Bracken & Church, 2013; Burke & Noumair, 2002; London, 2001), today the data is being incorporated into talent decisions (e.g., selection) and performance management (e.g., 360 feedback). The stakes are higher for everyone involved including participants, feedback facilitators, and coaches, and even the process or programs owners. In fact, we have seen this very shift in emphasis ourselves, and it has been the impetus in part for this article.

Over the past several years PepsiCo has been involved in a major talent management and leadership development initiative that has had a significant impact throughout multiple levels in our organization. Part of this process involves the use of data-driven methods for change (Waclawski & Church, 2002) in the form of a suite of individual assessment and development tools, many of which are quite well known to OD, TM, and HR practitioners. Although there are several key goals associated with the effort, called LeAD for Leadership Assessment and Development program (for more see Church & Rotolo, 2016; Church & Silzer, 2014), perhaps the most important one is driving the individual growth and development of leaders through the use of enhancing self-awareness via multi-trait multi-method (MTMM) data feedback and targeted action planning.

Although this seems like a process that everyone can agree with in theory, and in fact there has been considerable organizational pull for the program (since its launch in 2012 over 6,000 individuals have participated at one of the four various levels), when it comes to applying this framework to ourselves and our colleagues in HR, however, it suddenly becomes far more daunting. We have observed this to be the case on multiple fronts. In short, the process of shifting from a development-only context (OD mindset) to a broader effort aimed at enhancing leadership bench through decision-making (TM mindset) is an important dynamic to both understand and have experienced in real time. As more and more organizations adopt these tools and/or change the use of those already in place, it is critical that OD professionals know and understand the mindset shift that is occurring as well.

The purpose of this paper is to explore these issues in the context of participant observers in our roles as program owners and designers of the LeAD program at PepsiCo. Rather than focus on the technical aspects of the design of assessment tools and techniques (we will leave that to other more formal academic sources such as Groth-Marnat, 2009; Scott & Reynolds, 2010), our intent is to emphasize the more humanistic process and reflective sides. Specifically, we will describe some of the key observations and learnings we have had as a result of being intimately involved in these programs. We will start by providing a short description of the evolution and design of the LeAD program itself, including the tools and methods that are employed at each level, and the communications and resources offered in support. We will then focus on each of the five phases in the assessment and feedback process at PepsiCo and their respective assumptions and challenges, with additional insights based on our experience working with (i.e. assessing and development) our colleagues and ourselves as participants. The paper will conclude with some recommendations for practice going forward in this area.

The LeAD Program

To set the context for this discussion, it is important to first understand the assessment and development model in use in the organization. PepsiCo implemented the LeAD program to meet both OD and TM related needs. In order to support these goals, we developed a MTMM assessment and development process to assist leaders at various levels in the organization understand their strengths and opportunities against the organization’s Leadership Effectiveness Framework. This framework is based on the latest theory and research on leadership potential (Church & Silzer, 2014; Silzer & Church, 2009) and is measured and reported back to employees via 10 leadership competencies, which have been validated empirically to predict performance at higher levels.

As pictured in Figure 1, there are five distinct phases in the feedback process model which are quite consistent with a traditional diagnostic data-driven OD approach (e.g., Burke, 1982, 2011; Lewin, 1958; Waclawski & Church, 2002). Each level of the LeAD program takes participants through this process step-by-step in support of the program goals. While the emphasis is always on individual development (feedback is always given to participants and individual plans developed), participants are told of the intent and use of the data to inform talent decisions.

When an organization uses these types of assessment and development processes as input for talent decisions it does raise the stakes, however, since the results can have a significant impact on an individual’s career. There is an added level of complexity and delicacy added to the practice when HR and OD professionals themselves become the participants. The people who are typically leading the talent processes are not necessarily accustomed to others using the same information to make decisions about them. We have seen this manifest itself in interesting dynamics and behaviors in each of the five phases of the model outlined above. In short, when the shoemaker’s children finally get their own shoes, some interesting outcomes ensue. Let us now focus our attention on those insights and implications.

1. Assess Individuals Against Criteria

Starting our conversation with the assessment phase, the LeAD program measures participants against the ten competencies of the Leadership Effectiveness Framework. These competencies not only define skills that are critical and valued for future-focused business success at PepsiCo, they
also define foundational fixed state traits necessary for more general leadership capability (Church & Silzer, 2014).

Although entry into the LeAD program varies by level in the organization (based on the primary emphasis of the program – see Figure 2), it is open to all functions.

As a result, a number of participants in each program include colleagues in the OD and HR functions. So, what happens when HR and OD practitioners have been selected to go through these types of programs? In our experience, there is a significant defensive response triggered that results in an even greater level of resistance to being assessed than one finds in a standard participant from other areas of the organization. This response is somewhat perplexing when you consider the importance of the core values to OD as described earlier. While we know that many practitioners are active feedback seekers, we have seen more of this reactive behavior than might be expected. So why does this occur?

The key challenge here seems to be a concern over the assessment of potential versus say functional or managerial skills, and in particular, the answer to the question potential for what? (Church & Silzer, 2014). This is a key difference in doing assessment and development for leadership potential versus functional development. Once they recognize they are being assessed against a broader model of future potential (i.e. for larger roles with less technical and more leadership and strategic skills needed), for many HR professionals there is a seemingly sudden sense of apprehension that emerges about the focus of these assessments and the unique capabilities or skill sets of those doing the assessments. Given the program focuses on leadership potential broadly and not functionally in HR (or OD), colleagues are quick to question the relevance of the content for them. If the program is meant to find future leaders should they need to be assessed in the same way? Isn’t HR and/or OD different? Research would say no, but their own concerns say yes. Although one can argue that the process can be applied quite easily to any group, these participants who have been communicating the benefits of the program to their line and staff clients internally, and in fact helping them work with the data to inform talent decisions at various stages, now realize the same types of discussions will be had regarding their own data if they participate. Now we should point out that HR is not unique in their reaction (we have seen some of the same behavior among clients whose team members are going through at the same time they are); HR seems to be particularly concerned given how close they are to the source of the programs.

In terms of addressing these concerns, we have found that continuing to be transparent is critical, but so too is ensuring there is a discussion with participants regarding their future career aspirations and the distinction between accelerating a future leader of the organization versus building a culture of continuous learning and development at a broader level. This is the difference in the TM versus OD perspective playing out real time with participants. The more focused response though is that these types of assessment and development programs are about helping them to see their strengths and opportunities relative to leading the broader function in the future, and are they willing to sign-up for that? Thus, we are influencing both the “head” (e.g., the LeAD program is based on the theory and research and has been validated to be predictive of future performance), and the “heart” of why our colleagues should be inspired to participate in the LeAD process.

2. Provide Feedback to Individuals

In the second phase of the model, provide feedback, participants are given the results of the assessment process. Although very consistent with a standard data-driven OD approach with an emphasis on strengths and opportunities for development and growth as an individual, there are three key differences here: (1) the results are based on a MTMM approach so there is always more than one data point or tool being used as part of the feedback process, (2) the assessments contain an evaluative component (i.e. with a “score” representing a validated predicted level of future capability which we call LIFT), and (3) the results are delivered in a highly facilitated manner.

While we will not spend time addressing the specific process components of how the feedback is delivered, it is worth noting that all tiers of the program receive a personalized feedback report highlighting their strengths and development opportunity areas. The top three tiers also receive one-on-one feedback delivery sessions. While we might think that anyone would appreciate the time, resources, and personalized attention offered in these
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In the third phase of the process, participants must identify specific development actions they will take based on the feedback they received. While determining which opportunity areas they will be working on is led by the participant, PepsiCo does provide different development resources across all levels of the program to support these efforts. For example, there is a dedicated online portal specific to the LeAD program, and each level has its own section with development plan templates and samples, thought starters, and a comprehensive interactive list of development resources specific to each competency. These resources are comprised of both internal and external content and organized into the 70/20/10 model of development (Lombardo & Eichinger, 2002). In addition, there are custom resource guides, live sessions, webinars and 1-1 facilitated sessions at different levels all aimed at driving the development message home. By taking this approach we are reinforcing to participants that a mix of different development methodologies will ensure they are acting in a holistic way.

Given that OD practitioners and HR professionals value development of others and themselves, once again we would expect them to be positively disposed to working on their development plans as part of the program. The particular challenge for this step in the model with these types of participants, however, is one of stalling tactics – manifested in the form of procrastination and writer’s block. While
some of the underlying reasons may be the same as discussed in the feedback stage (e.g., concern over confidentiality), when we have discussed this phase with peers we have learned it is far easier to identify solutions for their business partners than it is for them to complete the tools for themselves. Even if they have accepted and internalized the feedback received (which can be questionable with any participant), it is much easier to continue to do your job, which is to help others grow, than it is to do the same for yourself. Suddenly the phrase “if I knew how to fix it, I wouldn’t have broken it in the first place” resonates with participants.

While the development tools and resources do alleviate some of the challenge presented here, especially at the higher tiers of the pyramid, the important point is to ensure there is an intervention and development support provided by someone who is knowledgeable in developing others, able to read and make use of the feedback effectively, and able to connect on a personal and confidential (politically unbiased) way with the HR or OD participant. If we think about these criteria carefully, some practitioners might pass all three hurdles but in other cases some additional capability may be required. Of course, the fact that those who do better on the assessments tend to have strong development plans is not surprising but it does make us wonder about the level of execution at times. From our experience those who you need to pursue the most for their development plans are also the least likely to change. You would think that HR and OD professionals would understand that but it seems to be a point that is lost on them. The only ways to get at this issue is the same as everyone else – follow-up and accountability measures (e.g., linking plan completion and/or improvement over time to performance goals). These are often not easy steps to take, however when starting a new assessment and development program.

4. Implement Specific Development Actions

Once the plans are in place, there is a significant decrease in the pace of the program as participants begin the process of implementing their specific development plan actions. The first step of this is to formalize the plan and get it into some type of tool or talent management system that allows for accountability, tracking, reporting, and analytics (e.g., trends in strengths and opportunities for various groups, functions, or parts of the business). For all tiers, once the development plan has been finalized, participants are provided with some “down time”; in the model this phase is predominantly self-led. As OD practitioners, we know that for true and measurable behavior change to happen, the individual must be accountable and make an active effort to pursue their identified opportunities. Therefore, we provide the participants with approximately 9–12 months to take those actions and make progress against their development objectives. In the case of the more senior level programs the development process generally takes longer with a window of about 18–24 months.

This phase in the process would seem like the easiest one to master organizationally since there is so much emphasis placed on the participant driving the action. That is the exact reason, however, it is the most difficult to manage. Since the OD and HR organization has a limited ability to force participants to take any action, we find there is a potential for participants to not put forth the effort required, or to allow other priorities to take precedent. Consequently, the plans may be formalized and for some only marginally executed or not at all for certain individuals who lack the intrinsic motivation to change. In addition, changing one’s behavior is not always easily achieved so this can be a difficult part of any feedback program or process (whether it is purely developmental or one used for decision-making).

Perhaps not surprisingly then, this same trend is evident in our OD and HR participants. In fact, we might even argue that as a group they are one of the worst offenders. Case in point, we recently had a large influx of HR professionals participate in the ELDC program. During the 2016 cycles, there were over 20 HR and OD professionals who completed the assessment phase, a significant increase in participation within our own function. While the increasing rate of participation of OD and HR practitioners in this leadership potential program was very positive, the level of utilization in the development plan and action phases of our model was more intriguing. When we conducted an audit of development plans of our past participants to ensure the right level of quality, we discovered that the level of follow-through was far less than that of other functions at the same level. It would seem that while our colleagues were very focused on ensuring the development plans and actions were of the high quality for their clients who were participants, they themselves were less attentive to the process. Why might this be?

One theory we have is that HR and OD professionals are motivated by helping others grow and develop and they simply prioritized their development first. As noted above, ensuring line leaders and managers develop quality plans and execute them takes time and energy, and in some cases, may require skills at crafting plans which not everyone is equally adept at doing. Perhaps then the HR participant plans will simply lag those of others. Another theory, though, follows the thread above which suggests that HR and OD practitioners may be less motivated to focus on their own development because they know the impact of the accountability involved in not changing and the levers needed to prolong the process. While it is difficult to address the first concern, short of aligning accountability measures to the lack of plans as well as progress, we did address the latter by deploying our other internal OD resources (including our own process leadership team in some cases) to ensuring that quality plans were developed for those individuals. The lesson here is that one cannot assume that HR and OD will be better at driving their own development simply because they are good at doing so with others. They need just as much coaching and facilitation from trained facilitators outside of their own purview as other participants.
5. Monitor Progress Indicators

Our final phase of the assessment and development process, which in some ways reflects the evaluation aspects of consulting interventions, has historically been one of the OD primary opportunity areas (Burke 1994; Church, 2003; Martineau & Preskill, 2002). This is no surprise since this is true in many other areas of organizational consulting and learning efforts, which is why the original Kirkpatrick model of program evaluation is so popular and has been expanded in scope to apply to all types of interventions (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006), including talent management and succession efforts (DeTuncq & Schmidt, 2013). Evaluation for this kind of assessment and development process can be difficult to measure effectively because the objective of the program is both medium and longer term. For example, on the medium side the emphasis is on enhancing leadership behaviors and increasing effectiveness at the individual level. Longer-term, however, the goal is more about the impact on bench strength and progression of high-potential talent into more senior positions in the organization (Church, 2013b).

Thus, the tools a program manager can use to measure results and performance includes a survey of participant attitudes regarding the program immediately following the effort (level 1), attitudes and actions taken a number of months after the effort and/or 360 feedback ratings a year or more after a development plan has been enacted (level 2), performance ratings of the participants over multiple years (level 3), and broader organizational bench metrics such as talent movement, turnover, promotion rates, etc., many of which can be better quantified (level 4). In our organization, we have leveraged all of these database-based approaches to monitoring progress and exploring the impact of our programs with considerable success at certain levels (Church & Rotolo, 2016).

While we have yet to have a large enough critical mass of participants within the HR and OD functions to explore results at all four levels of analysis, we have been able to explore levels 1 and 2 via some post program survey work done 6 and 12 months after the delivery of feedback. For this phase in the process we wanted to better understand how the HR participants felt about the program, and given some of the observations made earlier, was it distinct or different in any way from other participants in other functions or areas. Because of the volume of participants in the early career program, the Primary Leadership Development Course, we could examine survey data at 3 and 9 months after the feedback was delivered. While the results of the full analysis of the program can be found elsewhere (Church & Rotolo, 2016), we did see some interesting differences once again with respect to our HR and OD colleagues who participated.

First, we were very pleased to learn that there were no significant differences in participants’ level of satisfaction with the program between HR and the other functions in the organization at this early career level (with an overall average of 70% satisfied or very satisfied, and 83% reporting it met or significantly met their expectations). This suggests that early career professionals, many of whom are millennials, are equally interested by and engaged in the feedback process. Interestingly, the survey results revealed that HR participants were significantly more likely (82%) than other functions (67%) to have shared their feedback report and assessment results with their direct manager. Thus, HR professionals at this level were far more proactive in this stage of process which was encouraging. Despite this trend, however, HR participants were no more likely than other participants to have built a development plan at the time of the survey. It would appear that HR professionals were more engaged with the output at first but about the same as everyone else when it comes to driving ahead with plans and action.

Why might this have been the case? One simple explanation is that the HR and OD participants did quite well overall, i.e. the function scored higher overall compared with some of the other functions so perhaps they were simply excited to share their positive results and then lost steam. Another possibility is their heightened awareness of the potential impact of the results of the assessments on their rating as a high-potential. Clearly, they were more attuned to the influence that the results would have on the talent management process and how that works in practice. A third possibility, however, and one that we find particularly compelling is that HR and OD as general rule are often the shoe-maker’s children in many organizations. They consult to their clients, design the interventions, and engage in the change efforts as facilitators but rarely are they the ones receiving the results. Perhaps the idea that they were finally receiving feedback on their own career growth and potential trajectory, coupled with a larger proportion of millennial talent who are less cynical perhaps than their more senior and seasoned colleagues, was the cause of this spike in sharing results with managers. Unfortunately, this additional energy did not translate to above average levels of planning or taking action, so somewhere in the mix we need to find better ways to keep the heightened energy there. We will need to explore these trends further in the future. Nonetheless, it seems that giving the shoemaker’s children shoes in HR and OD does cause some increased level of engagement at least initially.

Final Thoughts and Recommendations

In sum, several forces in the business environment today including shrinking resources, shifting employee values, increased globalization and technology, and the rise of Big Data have resulted in a laser focus in many corporations on talent management. This focus is relying more and more on the data-driven feedback methods, once the purview of classic OD interventions aimed primarily at individual development and growth, for differentiation and decision-making. Thus, it is important that HR professionals, and OD practitioners in particular, understand this shift and begin to build the skills and capabilities to better embrace it going forward. As the stewards of people (now called talent) in organizations, there is a burning need for us to bring our passion for growth and expertise in development in this context. Part of this means also being part of the process. Just
as many OD practitioners went through the self-awareness, group dynamics, and process experiences in the 1960s-1970s to build their own capabilities as agents of change, today we need to see the same level of engagement in more formal assessment and development programs aimed at talent management and decision-making.

From our experiences presented here, it is clear that while HR and OD practitioners have an inherent interest in and energy for growth, there may be some heightened awareness, concerns and/or resistance regarding how this all works. Given this context, we suggest the following four recommendations for anyone that may find themselves in a similar situation of having to manage participants that also play more intimate roles in our professional lives.

First, be sensitive to any trepidation that might be experienced by your colleagues prior to starting the process. We are often empathetic and provide various approaches to influencing when our line business leaders express the same reticence. We would do well to remember that despite being armed with more knowledge and expertise than the typical participant, our OD and HR colleagues are also human, and are concerned for their individual future success in the organization just as much as anyone else.

Second, make sure you understand the measurement properties of the tools you are using (i.e. validity: criterion, face, construct) and the implications their results will have on other organizational processes (i.e. how will and should these results affect decision making regarding an individual career). Going forward, OD practitioners need to be better informed than in the past in the use of methodology and analytics to keep pace with the rate of change (Church & Dutta, 2013; Shull, et al., 2014)

Third, make sure you have the right feedback, coaching, and development skills and capabilities in place to run the program effectively. While many OD professionals are excellent at some aspects of this, when delivering feedback with a decision-making overlay the stakes are that much higher. You want to make sure that those that are delivering feedback have a level of expertise that is more than might have been the case in the past. If there is any doubt regarding the capability of those delivering the feedback, there is no chance the participant will ever accept and internalize that feedback for behavioral change.

Finally, be very clear about boundaries of roles and responsibilities during program management. When is it all right to be involved in a development planning conversation for another OD practitioner, and when is it not? Are they a peer that you are in the same competitive pool for future roles? If there is any doubt of confidentiality, conflict of interest, or if either party is uncomfortable with the program management relationship, the program manager should recuse herself.

While we have attempted to call attention to some key aspects involved in the use of assessment and development efforts in general, and when working with OD and HR practitioners, this is clearly fertile ground for more exploration and research. We have pointed out where some initial challenges have been met, or there are specific implications for OD participants in our experiences, but this has been within one organization only. In addition, there are unique cultural aspects regarding the level of acceptance of feedback and assessment tools that may pose significantly greater challenges to overcome elsewhere. We call on the OD field to share their nuanced experiences, and do more research to understand what we personally need when we reflect upon ourselves in the looking glass of the A&D process.

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Kimberly Happich, MA, is a Manager in the Global Talent Assessment & Development CoE at PepsiCo. Her previous roles include Relationship Manager for Talent Management in North America Beverages and HR Generalist for the Foodservice Sales organization. Prior to PepsiCo she was an Associate Management Consultant with E. Rogers Associates. Happich received her Master’s in Industrial/Organizational psychology from Hofstra University, and is an Associate Member of SIOP and APA. Happich can be reached at Kim.Happich@pepsico.com.

Allan H. Church, PhD, is Senior Vice President of Global Talent Assessment & Development at PepsiCo. Previously he was with Warner Burke Associates for many years, and at IBM. He is on the Board of Directors of HRPS, the Conference Board’s Council of Talent Management, an Adjunct Professor at Columbia University, and Associate Editor of JABS. He received his PhD in Organizational psychology from Columbia University, and is a Fellow of SIOP, APA and APS. Church can be reached at Allan.Church@pepsico.com.

What We Can Learn from Evaluating OD Interventions

The Paradox of Competing Demands

By Steve H. Cady and Joo-Hyung Kim

Unlike other capital investments, the value of learning appreciates, rather than depreciates.—Christopher Lee

The evaluation of OD interventions has never been more promising than in this era with the advancements of such tools as data analytics; yet it remains challenging for organizations to utilize a proper evaluation strategy. In this article, we begin by exploring the paradox of competing demands and then introduce a pragmatic model for selecting the optimal evaluation strategy by considering both the scope and rigor of analysis and leveraging the levels of evaluation from the field of training and development. We conclude with reflections on evaluation from the perspective of Gestalt OD Theory and collective consciousness.

In today’s world of artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and data analytics, we are on the cusp of demonstrating the central importance of OD interventions to the health and vitality of the systems we lead, consult, study, educate, and serve (Shah, Irani, & Sharif, 2017; Boje & Henderson, 2014). These advancements have enabled us to examine more readily how OD interventions positively impact the organization across multiple contexts and levels of analysis. For example, we are now capable of directly linking change processes to organizational performance (Pettigrew, Woodman, & Cameron, 2016). Further, this possibility does not stop with proving the importance of OD interventions. Evaluation tools enable us to learn from and tease out the nuances, and more specifically learn from interventions in order to improve them for future applications.

These conditions above have set the stage for an evolutionary leap in the field of OD (Kleiner, 2015; Laloux, 2014; Lawler & Worley, 2011). On a national level, the US department of labor predicts that behavioral science fields such as OD will be serving the fastest growing occupations (Career Trends, 2016). Likewise, the federal government has been supportive of the utility of behavioral sciences, as can be seen from the following statement: “Where federal policies have been designed to reflect behavioral science insights, they have substantially improved outcomes for the individuals, families, communities, and businesses those policies serve” (Presidential Executive Order, 2016, p.1).

While we are on the cusp of a new era, there are still challenges to be resolved. A successful evaluation of OD interventions is one of the difficulties many organizational practitioners and leaders confront.

The Paradox of Competing Demands

Assessing the efficacy of OD interventions can be elusive, because it is dependent on the required accuracy of analysis (Terborg, Howard, & Maxwell, 1980; Butler, Scott, & Edwards, 2003). The greater the required accuracy, the more rigorous and therefore more costly the design. It is this tension that describes the paradox of competing demands (Cady & Milz, 2015; Cady, Auger, & Foxon, 2010), which partly arises from...
the reality that you “can’t have your cake and eat it too.” The competing demands present a polarity of the purpose (i.e. prove and improve), and the cost (i.e. time and money).

**Purpose: Prove and Improve**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proving Questions</th>
<th>Improving Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>❑ How many people are expected to be impacted by the intervention?</td>
<td>❑ How can the results inform us about future applications?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Who is accountable for ensuring the intervention is implemented?</td>
<td>❑ Will the intervention be used in the future and, if so, how much?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Who else has the legal and governmental oversight?</td>
<td>❑ What are the uses for and scalability of the intervention for other settings?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ What were the political implications for the OD group and champions of the intervention?</td>
<td>❑ What is the expected impact on the wellbeing and culture of the organization?</td>
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</table>

The first dimension of prove and improve relates to the intended purpose of the intervention. OD professionals find themselves defending interventions, proving that the interventions had the intended impact and added value to the bottom line. The need for proof is about accountability for results, while making the business case to the skeptics. Because OD is considered to be based on the softer behavioral sciences, the role of evaluation can be undervalued and oversimplified. For example, it is easier to measure one’s blood pressure (hard science) than one’s attitude (soft science). Or, it is easier to measure cost savings from “right sizing” an organization, than it is to measure cost savings from a training initiative.

All the while, a core value of OD is to evaluate for the sake of learning, improving the intervention and leveraging its strengths. In other words, the second aim is to evaluate in order to improve the intervention and the organization for the future. This future focus is based on the desire to understand how interventions worked, identify the relatively important elements of the intervention, advance theories, and create more robust interventions.

In some cases, an accurate evaluation is necessary to determine whether the intervention should be continued or scaled for other settings (Kirkpatrick, 1998; Nielsen & Abildgaard, 2013). However, performing rigorous high quality evaluations of all interventions is not always practical, though it might appear ideal. It is a particularly relevant challenge when considering the competing paradox of time and money (Cady et al, 2010).

**Cost: Time and Money**

Conducting evaluations can be costly in terms of both time and money for all stakeholders involved. If either is too high, it is likely that the key decision makers will decide against conducting an evaluation altogether.

In terms of time, leaders will need to pull people away from their typical tasks for evaluations, such as being interviewed, filling out surveys, and providing performance data. This opportunity cost is not always seen as a good use of time. Too often, surveys are filled out and go into the proverbial “black box,” never to be mentioned again. This lack of closing the loop is one of the biggest hindrances to getting reasonable response rates. Further, it erodes the trust of those impacted by the intervention, not to mention the loss of quality information, undermining the future applications of the intervention.

**Money** may be another major determinant of an evaluation strategy, especially when outcomes are difficult to measure. It is possible that the evaluation can be the largest item in the budget for an intervention. Therefore, if the financial cost associated with an evaluation is beyond expectation, it may lead the organization to decide against conducting any evaluation. Evaluation competencies are another consideration. As you move to higher levels of evaluation, the required sophistication often surpasses the expertise of those responsible for the intervention, requiring additional inputs such as training and outsourced professionals.
Money Questions

- What are the intervention-related fees and staffing costs?
- How much are the opportunity costs from doing or not doing the evaluation?
- What are the technology, software, materials, and logistical requirements?
- How much of the intervention’s budget has been allocated for the evaluation?

You Can’t Have Your Cake, and Eat It Too

The competing demand comes from the desire to prove the effect of an intervention and improve it while minimizing the associated costs. Although a focus on the proving and improving of an intervention may result in better outcomes, it will cost more in terms of time and money (see Figure 1). In this case, how do you find the optimal point that balances the polarity of the benefits and costs?

You can choose a costly evaluation that bears important implications for the organization or community. If there is a long-term implementation plan for the intervention, the intended impact is likely vital to the future; further, demonstrating results in an objective fashion may be necessary for continued funding. However, there are also cases where a costly evaluation is not plausible or desirable.

There may be no time or budget allocated to the evaluation because evaluations are often reactionary and not given enough planning. For example, the whole evaluation process might begin with a leader simply saying, “Did that program work . . . can you confirm that it was worth our time and money . . . are we better off . . . we are not done, right . . . oh, by the way, can you provide an update focused on these questions at our meeting next week?” Moreover, some believe that funds would be better spent on additional interventions or even argue that evaluations are just a bureaucratic mechanism for show. The perception is that the outcomes of the process are so obvious that it is not necessary to conduct an evaluation (Cady & Milz, 2015; Cady et al, 2010). In this case, you can choose a less rigorous approach that will not only give you some general guidance for the intervention but also help persuade the skeptics about the need for an evaluation.

Selecting an Evaluation Strategy

Evaluations can take place at a single level or across multiple levels, and this is often determined by the tradeoff of the competing demands. This multi-level nature of evaluations has been originally adopted in the field of training and development, based on two prominent models: Kirkpatrick’s Levels of Evaluation (1998) and Phillips’ Return on Investment (1996). As shown in Table 1, there are five levels

![Figure 1. The Paradox of Competing Demands in Evaluating OD Interventions](image-url)

Table 1: Levels of Evaluation with Low and High Rigor Options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>High Rigor Example</th>
<th>Low Rigor Example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Attitude: How satisfied are people?</td>
<td>A validated survey with established reliability measures and limited open-ended questions for qualitative analysis.</td>
<td>Three questions on a flip chart with a couple of them scaled and a third open-ended question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Knowledge: What do people know?</td>
<td>Administer a test that addresses key concepts, information, and policies related to the initiative.</td>
<td>Ask questions in an open forum about the key aspects of the initiative and make notes of what you hear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Behavior: What are people doing?</td>
<td>Conduct behavioral observations of people; identify the frequencies of specific desired behaviors related to the initiative.</td>
<td>Administer a short questionnaire asking people to self-report their actions (verbal assessment also acceptable).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Impact: What has been achieved?</td>
<td>Compare specific key performance indicators before, during, and after the initiative has been implemented.</td>
<td>Gather reports from a short survey, emails, and meetings with examples of what has been achieved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Return: How much money has been generated versus spent?</td>
<td>Conduct a formal ROI analysis with key personnel reporting on verified costs (e.g., waste, errors, and cycle time) and the financial gains from the intervention. Calculate a verifiable ROI. Provide documented examples of best practices.</td>
<td>Conduct a pseudo ROI analysis with key personnel reporting on estimated costs (e.g., waste, errors, and cycle time) and gains from the intervention. Calculate a SWAG (serious wild ass guess) ROI with anecdotal evidence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of evaluation that progress from assessing attitudes at Level I up to assessing the Return on Investment at Level V. Kirkpatrick’s Evaluation Model was originally introduced in a trade journal, and was later published in his book titled *Evaluating Training Programs* (1979). Then, J.J. Phillips’ (1997) built on the Kirkpatrick’s model by adding a fifth level: the Return on Investment (ROI) framework. These two perspectives have been integrated and applied to a variety of change initiatives (Phillips, Phillips, & Ray, 2015; Russ-Eft et al., 2008), and we recommend that OD professionals include these approaches in their toolkit for the evaluation and intervention design process. The two frameworks will provide you with the common language that is often used throughout organizations among leaders and managers alike.

In Figure 2, we propose that you begin your evaluation design process with identifying the competing demand of purpose, namely the desire to prove and improve the intervention.

Then, ascertain the availability of time and money to implement the evaluation. Figure 2 provides the options you can choose from with regard to the amount of rigor. For example, if you find yourself in need of both proving and improving the intervention, then it is recommended that you use all five levels of evaluation. If you have unlimited time and money, you are in a position to provide the highest level of rigor in your assessment. However, as we have discussed, this is typically not possible. While the tools for data analytics are available, the staffing and related analytical costs are still considerably high (BI-Survey.com, 2015; Microstrategy, 2014).

Rigor influences how formal and planned an evaluation is, thus impacting the validity and reliability of the results. In addition, the scope of the evaluation can change from examining the participants’ experiences to verifying the intervention’s impact on the organization. Next, we will walk through some scenarios using Table 1 as a guide to help you decide the level of evaluation. Then, Figure 2 provides further examples on the ways to conduct less rigorous evaluations when there are limitations on time and money.

Let’s start with a scenario in which you want to both prove and improve a team-level mediation intervention. When conducting an evaluation with high rigor, the scope is the most invasive and extreme; it involves higher costs with a formal survey to assess reactions (Level 1), a test on the mediation model being used (Level 2), and the monitoring of the mediation practices utilized (Level 3). The evaluation also requires the evidence for supporting high-leverage improvements while also proving the degree of impact, such as the frequency of mediations (Level 4), and a well-documented ROI (Level 5). These measures attempt to answer the following questions, for example:

- How effective was the team mediation intervention?
- How can it be more effective?
- What difference has it made?
- What errors have been averted?
- How much cost has been saved?
- What revenues have been improved?

All five levels of evaluation are to be conducted in a formal and valid fashion by trained research professionals.

Now, let’s consider a situation where you find yourself in need of proving whether the intervention worked as intended; however, you do not want to improve the intervention for the future. While the evaluation aims at assessing the changes in operations and behaviors, the focus is on the direct impact of the intervention. In the case of the team mediation intervention, this might involve assessing the mediation practices utilized (Level 3) and the number of mediations conducted or the amount of time to resolution (Level 4). These measures would be taken before, during, and after the intervention implementation.

When conducting an evaluation with high rigor, the scope is the most invasive and extreme; it involves higher costs with a formal survey to assess reactions (Level 1), a test on the mediation model being used (Level 2), and the monitoring of the mediation practices utilized (Level 3). The evaluation also requires the evidence for supporting high-leverage improvements while also proving the degree of impact, such as the frequency of mediations (Level 4), and a well-documented ROI (Level 5). The lowest level of evaluation, before there is no evaluation required at all, is the scenario where you do not want to prove whether the intervention worked, yet you need to improve it for future applications. In this evaluation strategy, you would conduct Level 1, 2, and 3 evaluations. Here you...
examine the specific intervention’s impact on individuals’ perceptions and behaviors. For example, you might assess reactions to the team mediation (Level 1) and check if the mediation model has been properly understood (Level 2). You might use three questions on a flip chart to assess the satisfaction level, and ask them to write down the components of the mediation to check the learning outcomes.

Within all of these strategies, you may need to conduct a less rigorous evaluation providing a rough understanding of how to improve the intervention by gathering information with limited resources in a shorter time period. For example, you may walk around the organization taking note of changes, conduct an informal poll during a meeting, and seek personal inputs about the perceived impact of the intervention (Table 1). Leaders may be asked to estimate the approximate cost savings and revenue improvements, thereby estimating a pseudo-ROI.

Summary and Reflections

The process of evaluating interventions is about determining whether the path you are on has been the most effective strategy efficiently executed for the system you are in. In turn, this will influence how you move into the future. The fundamental premise of a good evaluation, as consistent with the principle of the Gestalt Theory of OD, is self-awareness on a large-scale. Self-awareness serves as the starting point of the whole energizing action cycle in the Gestalt Group Cycle (Zinker, 1980); to be able to figure out the future path, people and the whole systems must be aware of themselves. Likewise, as in the notion of collective consciousness, group awareness can act as a unifying force for taking ownership in determining how to move forward together (Tsoukalas, 2007).

The models presented here provide a framework for considering the competing demands and the trade-offs to be made. Developing an effective evaluation strategy is subtle, and grey areas are manifold. For example, imagine you are working on the decision tree model (Figure 2) and it suggests that an informal SWAG (serious wild ass guess) evaluation is the best option with Levels 4 and 5, because time and money are limited. Is this “bad”? We say “no.” The reason is two-fold. First, getting leaders to slow down and think through the questions necessary to evaluate an OD intervention is important. For example, a venture capitalist conducts valuations using internal rates of return (IRR), which are based on critical assumptions. The value of these investments often dwarfs the costs of most OD interventions; and, it is interesting to note that IRR calculations are made with some SWAG. Similarly, engaging leaders in the analysis of the intervention’s impact is about creating conscious and more mindful decisions on the ways to improve the organization. Second, if the leaders paying for the intervention get feedback from credible peers that the intervention resulted in a meaningful return on the investment, they will deem the feedback a valid data point. While this belief is a perception, it is helpful to know key stakeholders’ collective reality in order to figure out the next steps for organizational change efforts. In short, evaluations do not happen in a perfect world; there are always compromises that must be made.

The bottom line is this: if you can achieve the intended purpose of the evaluation, then you have found the balance with the paradox of competing demands. You may find that your desired evaluation strategy differs significantly from those you are serving. As a result, go back to the drawing board and rethink what is most important to you, which may require renegotiating expectations with key leaders and other stakeholders.

In closing, the evaluation of OD interventions supports the development of a learning organization, and this is where a consultant as an interevner can play an important role in helping the organization in service or disservice of itself. In providing the system with a better understanding of itself through rigorous evaluations, the system will change its thinking paradigm and move toward a more intentional way of self-organizing (Nevis, 2013). When the system begins to change its thinking paradigm, the learning has begun and “action learning” occurs. This shift in thinking and learning is what will lead to new organizational habits that result in long-term sustainability.

References


Interested in learning more about the differences OD makes? See the call for articles on page 5.

Steve Cady, PhD, is a professor, author, speaker, and consultant. He is a graduate faculty member in the Bowling Green State University Master of Organization Development Program. Cady is the coauthor of The Change Handbook, author of Stepping Stones to Success and PBS DVD titled Life Inspired. He is also the Chief Editor and Curator for the BKpedia Change & Innovation Collection. He can be reached at steve@stevecady.com.

Joo-Hyung Kim is an MBA candidate at Bowling Green State University. She earned her bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Korea University. Her research interests include judgment and decision making, emotion, and applicant attraction. She can be reached at jookim@bgsu.edu.
Leveraging Differences and Inclusion Pays Off

Measuring the Impact on Profits and Productivity

By Judith H. Katz and Frederick A. Miller

One of the greatest challenges organizations face in their efforts to leverage differences and build inclusion is that they are often viewed as “soft”—as contributing tangentially, at best, to the “real” operations and business results of the organization, and possibly most damnable of all, as unmeasurable (Hubbard, 2004).

Today we are seeing a greater range of metrics and measures to assess progress with respect to diversity targets and goals; however, connecting diversity and inclusion (D&I) change efforts to the bottom line continues to be a challenge for most organizations and change agents. Many organizations talk about the importance of D&I to their success but still are not able to make the direct connection to achieving organizational objectives and bottom-line results (Cross, Katz, Miller, & Seashore, 2004; Heitner, Kahn, & Sherman, 2013). In this article, we present nine examples of measurable, bottom-line results achieved through the implementation of total systems change efforts to create inclusive workplace practices and interactions that leverage differences.

Identifying Metrics that Matter

One of the many challenges raised about D&I efforts is in how to measure success. In some organizations, success is judged by increased diversity. Measures and metrics often focus on elements of talent management—such as hiring, retention/turnover, promotions, training, development, and pay equity. These measures might also include the return on investment (ROI) that diversity brings, including savings due to increased retention and reduced absenteeism (Balter, Chow, & Yin, 2014). In addition to looking at increased representation and savings with respect to talent, some organizations are also focusing their metrics on inclusion by integrating questions about the culture and the degree to which people feel included into employee engagement surveys (Balter, Chow, & Yin, 2014). Other organizations have added to their stable of metrics a focus on increased representation in supplier diversity and multicultural marketing (Brenman, 2013; Hubbard, 2004).

The good news is that there is a growing sophistication with respect to how organizations are framing and thinking about D&I efforts and their impact. As these efforts become more integrated into business processes—as they become a way of doing business—how they are measured becomes more integrated into the work of the organization as well. Some leaders and change agents pay careful attention to the business measures that suffer when people are not included and interacting effectively, then monitor how those measures change as D&I efforts unfold. For instance, operations leaders at an airline began mapping the impact of D&I training to concourse ramp employees’ ability to get planes out on time. This type of bottom-line measure clearly demonstrates how a culture of inclusion that leverages differences impacts productivity and performance; in short, why these metrics matter.
How Strategies to Build Inclusive Workplace Practices and Interactions that Leverage Differences Impact Bottom-line ROI

Data gathered from decades’ worth of employee surveys, focus groups, and individual interviews have reinforced that inclusion is a prerequisite for engagement, performance, and collaboration (Allen, Bryant, & Vardaman, 2010; Lockwood, 2005). For people to do their best work as individuals and members of well-functioning teams, they need to have a sense of belonging; to feel recognized, respected, and valued for who they are; and to experience supportive energy from their leaders, colleagues, and others, enabling them to contribute and grow (Miller & Katz, 2002).

When inclusion is the common language of the organization, people understand one another more quickly and more accurately; they have the sense of safety needed to speak up, make problems visible, and address problems quickly rather than being afraid of being seen as the dissenting voice or the bearer of bad news. As a result, problem solving and decision making are accelerated and waste is eliminated (Katz & Miller, 2013). Making inclusion a way of life requires more than training or an increase in representation, but a comprehensive and targeted systems approach, tailored to the needs of the business, in which differences and inclusion are a means (not ends unto themselves) to achieving higher performance, impacting everyday interactions and decisions. A total systems change effort needs to be undertaken to create a major shift in what is valued, who is at the table, how people interact, and how work gets done.

Following are nine examples of the bottom-line impact of inclusion culture change efforts. Common elements of these change strategies included:

» Selecting, educating, and supporting a core group of internal change advocates focused on accelerating change through peer-to-peer interaction;

» Conducting organization-wide education on the practice of inclusive behaviors to develop skills to leverage differences and create a common language across the organization (see Figure 4, “Conscious Actions for Inclusion”);

» Just-in-time coaching regarding inclusive mindsets and behaviors for teams;

» Implementing a measurement tool to hold people accountable for demonstrating inclusive behaviors (the “Commitment Curve to Mastery,” see Figure 1);

» Revising people policies to reflect inclusive values and practices (e.g., selection, hiring, coaching, development, performance reviews, rewards/bonuses, promotions;

» Implementing tools to enable clear communication and eliminate waste in meetings and day-to-day interactions; and

» Identifying core business processes and metrics where greater inclusion would improve to a significant degree.

The nine examples are taken from inclusion-building efforts within Fortune 100 companies, ranging from multinational manufacturing, to financial services, to supply-chain and customer service all over the globe. Other clients that have successfully implemented similar inclusion strategies include large non-profits, educational institutions, municipalities, and governmental organizations. The following outcomes were assessed using measures that were important to the organizations themselves—how they improved the bottom line and/or delivery of services.

Example 1: Decreased Defects and Increased Quality

Manufacturing Plant, North America

Quality defects due to human error had been climbing for over a year when a quality improvement strategy was initiated. At about the same time, a multi-phased inclusion effort was initiated that included foundational inclusion education for people leaders, building a cohort of internal change agents, providing just-in-time coaching for leaders and team members in inclusive mindsets and behaviors, and forming compliance teams.
2 illustrates the impact of these targeted actions to reduce human error. The number of human errors decreased from a monthly high of 160 in mid-June to 29 in December. The compliance team’s performance, which was integral to the reduction of human errors in the process, was specifically enabled by integrating inclusive mindsets and behaviors into day-to-day interactions.

**Example 2:**
Changeover Decreased and Volume Increased

**Manufacturing Plant, Central America**
In the one-year period following implementation of the inclusion change effort focusing on enhancing day-to-day interactions and collaboration among line managers and work teams, company managers reported a noticeable increase in employee morale and job satisfaction. When an aggressive plan was announced to decrease manufacturing downtime, often incurred when changing from one process or product to another, individuals at all levels felt safe to lean into discomfort and share solutions to address the new schedule without detrimental effects on performance. They were also able to address root cause problems that had previously led to inefficient changeovers with more than 16 hours of downtime. The inclusive way the scheduling change was implemented resulted in the following improvements:
- 48% unplanned volume increase;
- Customer service level of 100%;
- Time allotted to changeovers decreased from 3.55 hours to 2.8 hours, on average;
- Schedule adherence and run-time accuracy remained at 100%; and
- Production plan was fulfilled with minimal or no overtime.

**Example 3:**
Production Targets Reached and Exceeded

**Manufacturing Plant, Europe**
To meet new organizational targets, the plant needed to raise its production from an average of 4.6 lots per week to a new target of 5.5 lots—and do it within two months (Figure 3). Instead of repeating past practices of simply announcing the goal and which changes to make, the plant leader met with and solicited ideas from shop floor team members about how to increase production. The result was that the plant not only met the new target, it exceeded it.
- 4.6 lots per week: Previous production levels;
- 5.5 lots per week: New performance target; and
- 6.0 lots per week: Actual performance level achieved within specified two months.
Example 4: Reduced Process Time

Manufacturing Plant, Central America
Prior to the inclusion-building change effort, suggestions from shop floor employees for process improvements were discouraged and new team members were expected to defer to seniority. After implementing inclusive practices, a new team member felt empowered enough to present an idea for automating a time-consuming process of manually labeling packages. The automated process reduced batch process time from 1 hour to 5 minutes—a 92% reduction—while also reducing the margin of error associated with manual input. Many other innovative ideas began to flourish as shop floor team members felt a sense of safety to engage and individuals could bring “fresh eyes” and their voice to solving problems.

» 92% reduction in process time (from 1 hour to 5 minutes per batch); and
» Process errors: significantly reduced.

Example 5: More Efficient Meetings and Time Saved

Manufacturing Organization, North America
In response to team members’ complaints about ineffective meetings, a 17-member safety team began using a new “Standard Work Agenda” with enhanced norms of interaction. The Standard Work Agenda, distributed in advance of any meeting, clarifies not only the agenda, but also the purpose of the meeting, the ground rules, and the people invited. By stating ground rules, people come into the meeting on the same page regarding how they will interact and how they will achieve the purpose of the meeting. By listing attendees, each person can assess whether a person with critical information is missing or if their own presence at the meeting is necessary to reach the intended outcomes. By having an agenda in advance, people come to the meeting knowing what the discussion is and how best to contribute. The result is having the right people doing the right work at the right time. Incorporating this inclusive meeting norm reduced the team’s monthly meeting time by 30 minutes, while increasing members’ ratings of meeting effectiveness.

» 8.5 working hours per month saved for one team.

Example 6: Decreased Errors and Increased Quality

Packaging Production Facility, North America
The Quality Assurance Group conducted approximately 1,000 shop floor inspections
annually. In the year before the area began to focus on inclusion, there were 2,100 quality observations/errors identified during these inspections (Table 1). After engaging the shop floor operators to use inclusive mindsets and behaviors to make problems visible and take ownership for preventing errors, the area went from 2,100 quality errors to 550 in a three-year period. The three shift teams joined to own the quality issues together, rather than blaming each other or assuming that management was accountable. This drastic reduction in observations improved productivity, increased efficiency, and empowered operators to be accountable for quality. Moreover, as a result of the increased involvement, people were more engaged and turnover decreased.

Example 7:
Reduced Costs and Increased Profitability

Insurance Company, North America
To turn around an underperforming claim office, a leader implemented inclusive mindsets and behaviors throughout the office, re-engineered the center’s processes using a diverse team, and piloted a customer care team (Table 2). The leader also chartered a Diversity and Inclusion Committee that modeled inclusive behaviors and collaboration, initiated processes for increasing team member engagement, and provided a feedback loop to leadership. Business results significantly increased in the year following the implementation of these actions.

Example 8:
Created a New Model Using Inclusion for Increased Profitability and Innovation

Insurance Company, North America
A claim center leader needed to develop and implement a new operating model for claim recovery (Table 3). Inclusive mindsets and behaviors were integrated into their day-to-day interactions. As a result, collaboration and innovative problem solving increased and the center became a profitable model adopted throughout carrier’s offices in the U.S.

Example 9:
Increased Right First Time and Overall Process Improvements

Manufacturing Plant, Europe
Since implementing an effort focused on improving workplace interactions using inclusive mindsets and behaviors, the plant saw significant improvements in morale, productivity, and plant safety. In addition to significant improvements in quality and customer service, the plant also received the “Best Factory” award in the People Development category, given by a European university management school.

Measurable Plant Accomplishments:
- Over 600 small but impactful improvements submitted and delivered by individuals;

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*Inclusive education begins
» Over 90% “Right First Time” on work orders;
» 98.5% satisfaction with customer service;
» Zero maintenance calibration misses in over 1,000 working days;
» Zero major accidents for over two years;
» 100% completion of corrective actions; and
» Deviations reduced by 70%.

The plant manager was quoted as saying, “The culture is absolutely alive and kicking. I see inclusion working in all our activities and in our results every day. We are a more connected and collaborative organization.” In addition to the tangible results above, he also identified improvements that he deemed equally important. These included:
» Fantastic discretionary effort;
» Rapid knowledge transfer; and
» People speaking up and giving authentic feedback, helping to make the plant more high performing every day.

Conclusion

In many ways, the last example sums up the power and impact that creating a culture of inclusion that leverages differences can have on an organization’s ability to achieve results. Most leaders today want an organization that is “alive and kicking” and “connected and collaborative.” Whether the measures that matter are significantly increasing production, quality, innovation or reducing errors or costs, these examples demonstrate that inclusion does make a difference in bottom-line performance.

People ARE an organization’s most important asset—an asset whose value will grow immeasurably if unleashed by an inclusive culture that enables all the people of the organization to participate, collaborate, communicate, and do their best work.

When inclusion makes space for the uniquely different perspectives and skill sets present in the workforce and enables an environment that encourages and facilitates free-flowing interaction and collaboration between and among people from all backgrounds, divisions, disciplines, and hierarchical levels of the organization, that organization can deliver faster, cheaper, and more innovatively than before.

Implementing a change process that values inclusive mindsets and behaviors is one of the most effective paths for increasing productivity and innovation in today’s organizations. The results speak for themselves. In the dollars-and-cents numbers of return-on-investment, and in the energy and commitment that shows on the faces of people as they work together, inclusive practices produce results that can no longer be called “soft.” The only real words to describe them are “good business.”

References


Judith H. Katz and Frederick A. Miller, thought leaders in organization development for more than 40 years, have created numerous breakthrough concepts in their field, including Inclusion as the HOW® as a foundational mindset for higher operational performance and accelerated results. As Executive Vice President and CEO (respectively) of The Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group, Inc.—one of Consulting Magazine’s Seven Small Jewels in 2010—they have partnered with Fortune 50 companies around the globe to elevate the quality of interactions, leverage people’s differences, and transform workplaces. Both recipients of the OD Network’s Lifetime Achievement Award, they have co-authored several books, including *Opening Doors to Teamwork and Collaboration: 4 Keys that Change EVERYTHING* (Berrett-Koehler, 2013). Katz can be reached at judithkatz@kjcg.com. Miller can be reached at familler@kjcg.com.
“Despite popular wisdom, we inherit little from others’ experience except clues on how to acquire our own. It did not matter that my flying teacher was a world-class aviator. I could achieve only minimal knowledge and mediocre skills. Luckily, I was blessed with a taste for risking the unknown.”
under the tail, hence it’s generic name “tail-dragger.” To fly it, I had to learn a new definition of stalling. In a car, the engine stops. In a plane with engine running, you will stall if you get the nose so high and slow down so much that the wings can’t sustain lift. The craft drops like a rock until you push the stick forward and add full throttle.

The “three-point landing,” a relic of tail-dragger days, requires the skill to stall the plane a few seconds before it touches down on three wheels. That way it stays down. You practice high-altitude stalls until you feel secure enough to recover should you stall by accident. If you want to fly, you’ve got to learn how to stall.

I mastered stalls. Setting the plane down gently was another matter. I choked as the ground came up. I would raise the nose too soon, stall high, and produce a bone-crunching drop to the runway. “That,” McGlone said the first time, “was a controlled crash!” So I’d keep the nose low and fly the front wheels into the runway, bouncing 30 feet into the air. I landed with sweaty palms, body coiled like a spring. “It’s your anxiety,” McGlone said. “You’re way too tense!” He advised me to take deep breaths.

One day I put the little plane down a few times, and Jack had me pull over. He climbed out and yelled above the engine, “It’s all yours.” I gulped. Most students soloed in eight hours. I was up to ten. “Are you sure?” I called back. McGlone pointed to a parallel landing strip where I saw an Aeronca identical to mine make a beautiful three-pointer. “There goes my best student,” he shouted. “He never makes a mistake. I worry about him! I mess him up on purpose so he can learn to get out of trouble. But you? I’m not worried about you. You know how to correct every mistake there is!”

I soloed without incident. Then I made cross-country flights over farms and towns to unfamiliar airfields. Flying a primitive plane with no electrical system requires you to acquire capabilities birds have at birth. You can’t move unless somebody spins your prop. You must learn how the craft behaves in wind, rain, snow, heat, and cold. You must avoid clouds and not fly before dawn or after dusk. You navigate with a magnetic compass, using a map to identify roads, rivers, railways, and towns below. You land only if you can see the ground well before you get there.

On a sunny June morning just before my 22nd birthday, a federal examiner gave me my licensing ride. I planned and flew part of a route he selected, did stalls, and reacted to simulated emergencies. When it came time to land, I lined up on the runway, cut the throttle, and set that Champ down whisper-soft on three wheels, the best three-pointer I ever made! In that moment of touching down, I knew my archetypal fantasy had become real.

For years after that I flew airplanes for pleasure. I enjoyed taking my friends and children up to see what the birds saw. I made many errors. In graduate school, I took three friends from Iowa City to Chicago and, despite a radio failure, made a night landing at O’Hare. I landed in snow and barely made it out after hopping over a fence. One day I floated over a dirt field unable to land until I realized the wind had shifted. Once, showing off for a 12-year-old child, I landed us at the wrong airport.

Three decades after my hard-won first solo, my inner 6-year-old had scratched his primal itch. I quit the air, having recovered safely from every mistake I ever made. In the Institute of Aviation Alumni News that year I read that Jack McGlone, who taught me that you can learn to correct errors only by making them, had more than fulfilled his dream. He was a senior Captain based in Chicago with American Airlines.

Life Lessons

Nobody is born to fly. It took humans thousands of years to master what birds do instinctively. Many people flew before Wilbur and Orville in gliders and hot air balloons without engines. The Wrights alone were “systems thinkers.” They realized that to fly a wing reliably requires solving three interlocking engineering problems. You must: (1) get it into the air, (2) keep it in the air, and (3) make it go where you want. Guided by this deceptively simple construct, the brothers devised their own wing, elevator, rudder, engine, and propeller. They worked out an exquisite balance. They didn’t just fly. They invented the world’s first controllable powered aircraft.

The Wrights’ example stuck with me through 50 years of teaching, researching, managing, and consulting. I came to understand that “change” means doing something you never did before. I encountered complex systems that, like the weather, I could navigate but not control.
Opting for a bumpy ride into the unknown is a risky business. Only by chancing failure could my clients and I get what we wanted in a changing world.

My friend and mentor Eric Trist used to say in response to any request, “I think we can help you with that.” Eric was a gifted social scientist. He was given more to humility than bravado. He knew that if he got people learning by doing, they would discover new capabilities. He framed that as “action research,” collaborative experiments in which all the actors had a stake. His payoff was refining his theories of what works. Consulting that way, I could count on all the actors doing our best with what we had. My security blanket became framing every project as action research. The clients and I agreed to explore together the every project as action research. The clients and I agreed to explore together the inner workings of our organizations. For 40 years, I have conducted structural change projects in which all the actors had a stake. I learned that no organization equals our hopes for it. I learned that technology doesn’t care how it’s used nor money how it’s spent. I learned that we improve systems by choice, not chance. I learned that no two of us are alike and all of us have the same needs. I learned to accept others’ faults by accepting my own. Like the Wrights, I learned that everything is connected to everything else. I learned to fly by flying.

To this day, those few lessons still strike me as worth a few bumpy landings.

Reference


Marvin Weisbord had a 50 year career as manager, writer, researcher, and consultant to corporations and medical schools. He was a founder and co-director of Future Search Network, a global nonprofit whose members manage strategic planning meetings for communities world wide. He received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Organization Development Network, which voted his book Productive Workplaces one of the “Top Five Most Influential OD books of the Past 40 Years.” For 20 years he was a partner in the consulting firm Block Petrella Weisbord and a member of NTL Institute for Applied Behavioral Science and of the European Institute for Transnational Studies. He can be reached at mrw19010@gmail.com

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From the Practicing OD Editors
Beth Applegate and Tim Lannan

As co-editors of Practicing OD, we have valued the opportunity to partner, introduce new voices to our beloved ODN community, and give back through our volunteer roles for ODN. As the final edition that we will co-edit goes to print, we have been reflecting upon the boundaries and context of the field of OD and the importance of supplementing “or” thinking with “and” thinking. We are clear that our work in the field of OD is in service to advancing social justice, equity, democratic processes, and empowerment values through increasing our client systems’ ability and willingness to make choices that recognize the interconnectedness between the individual, organization, and society.

As two people with multiple dominate social group identities, when we chose Polarity Thinking as our final topic, we could not have predicted how timely and relevant it would be. As practitioners and scholars, we can use the theory to address increasingly complex issues without being overwhelmed. Polarity Thinking provides a useful tool for understanding and dealing with increasing chronic conflict and polarization experienced nationally and globally. Because the underlying principles apply the same way to individual, organizational, national, and international issues, what we learn from applying “and” thinking is scalable. As the following articles demonstrate, practitioners can use Polarity Thinking in individual coaching, interventions with national and international organizations, and with society writ-large. The greater the complexity, the more useful it is to see underlying, predictable patterns—and polarities are just such a set of underlying predictable patterns. In addition, leveraging polarities will increase the attainability, speed, and sustainability of change initiatives.

You might describe polarities as interdependent pairs, dilemmas, or positive opposites. No matter what we name them, they are unavoidable because they are inherently unsolvable: you cannot choose one pole of the pair as a “solution” to the neglect of the other pole and be successful over time. Because polarities are unavoidable and unsolvable, we often experience them as chronic conflicts between polarized groups as well as within groups, organizations, and society. “Or” thinking is essential for learning and for solving problems; “and” thinking is a supplement to “or” thinking, not a replacement for it. If the polarization is over a polarity, not only are both sides “right,” they both need each other’s wisdom to be successful over time.

We as OD practitioners can leverage Polarity Thinking when individuals, organizations, and communities are dealing with issues for which “or” is a false choice. Polarity thinking helps us see ourselves and our world more completely, thus increasing our capacity to love. This builds on Jack Gibb’s insight that “seeing is loving.” As Applied Behavioral Science practitioners we are well positioned to choose love as we bring to the fore the tradition of inquiry and dialogue in service of diversity and inclusion, social justice, and healthy individuals, groups, and organizations in the world.
Submission Guidelines

- Articles should be practical and short (900–1200 words; 3–4 pages single-spaced)
  - Write in your own (first-person) voice using simple, direct, conversational language.
  - Focus on what you are discussing, how it works, or can be used, and why it works (what you believe or how theory supports it).
  - Use bulleted lists and short sections with subheads to make it easier to read.
  - Include everything in the text. No sidebars. No or very limited graphics.
  - Do not use footnotes or citations if at all possible. Citations, if essential, should be included in the text with a short list of references at the end of the article.
- Articles can be written from various perspectives, including but not limited to;
  - Brief case studies that highlight useful concepts, applied theories, lessons learned, and implications for future practice.
- Guidelines and tips for applying proven or cutting-edge methods, principles, processes, practices, interventions, and tools.
- Thought-provoking essays on practice-related challenges, questions that emerged from a client engagement, or new trends and technologies that will influence the practice of OD.
- Include a short (25–50 word) author bio with your email so readers can contact you.
- Submit Microsoft Word electronic copies only to:
  - Stacey Heath (staceyheath@aol.com)
  - Deb Peters (deb.peters@morganmcguireleadership.com)
  - Rosiland Spigel (Rosiland@Spigelconsulting.com)
  - John Vogelsang (jvogelsang@earthlink.net)
  - Include your name, phone number, and email address.
  - If your article is accepted for publication, you will be notified via email.
By Gail Sacconey Townsend

**Polarity Defined**

In my work as an organization development leader and practitioner, the identification and exploration of polarities is essential in change navigation. Many issues groups face are not problems to be solved. They are polarities to be optimized. Barry Johnson defines a polarity as having two or more right answers that are interdependent. It contains elements that appear to be mutually exclusive, operate simultaneously, and create chaos within organizations, teams, and individuals if not optimized appropriately. Carl Jung posited that as people individuate; they work with their ‘warring opposites’ and integrate them into a holistic person. The same is true for working polarities at organization and societal levels.

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**Identify, Map, and Optimize Polarities**

The ability to turn dilemmas—which unlike problems—cannot be solved, into opportunities is an important element in my organization development practice. I help groups see that both viewpoints have validity. It is challenging for groups to participate in constructive dialogue about both polarity spectrums. My strategy as a change specialist is to clarify polarities, create respectful learning environments, identify group-level dynamics and individual viewpoints, and facilitate discussion strategies to productively manage polarities.

Some problems can be addressed with either/or thinking; however, polarities are addressed with both/and thinking. Situations that contain recurring back and forth debates typically have a polarity present. Polarity tensions are present at all intervention levels: Individual, team, and whole system. Polarity theory teaches both/and thinking is essential and managing the polarity is critical to help groups get unstuck and navigate resistance. A few typical polarities include the pairs of interdependent opposites in Figure 1.

**Polarity Optimization Methodology**

Polarity mapping methodology brings to consciousness opposite, interdependent considerations and how to optimize them.

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<td>Action and Reflection</td>
<td>Innovation and Efficiency</td>
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*Figure 1. System-Level Polarities*
This helps to understand the spectrums and how to address them. My work with groups involves discussion of how to manage polarities and to live with productive ambiguity, rather than urgently act to solve problems. This methodology is helpful when there is need to:

- Provide alternative approaches with challenging, recurring situations;
- Broaden perspectives and learn from differences; and
- Clarify and increase effective actions.

The manner a polarity is addressed is different from how a problem is resolved. A polarity exists when these conditions are present:

- Recurring circumstances and little progress;
- Solutions result in more problems;
- Both poles are important for long-term success;
- Team members fail to recognize importance of other side;
- Pendulum swing actions support one polarity only;
- Two or more interdependent right answers inherent within each polarity; and
- Large time consumption and slow advancement.

When these conditions prevail, there is a polarity to identify, manage, right size, and optimize. Significant change generally creates ambiguous, challenging situations. When these situations exist, polarity mapping processes provide opportunity to reflect on past unsuccessful pendulum-swing strategies to assist groups see they often simplify by focusing on only one side of the polarity.

Through understanding polarity cycles, I structure groups to identify their system dichotomies and see the whole picture inherent with interdependent opposites. Some important points to remember about polarities are:

- Polarities exist at organization, team, and individual levels.
- Polarities consist of two opposing perspectives or poles.
- Each polarity is beneficial and problematic.

When individuals have positioned thinking at either end of a polarity, they tend to strongly defend their opinions. The process of reframing, a significant element of polarity optimization, helps groups learn from differences.

**Polarity Discussions**

**Step 1. Describe the issue**

When continual debate persists on opposing solutions, I ask groups to convey experiences with opposing tension situations. I encourage listening to both sides and note past efforts that have failed to achieve sustainable resolution. This assists groups to learn through listening to others’ differing perspectives. Consciousness is raised as they realize that sustainability was not achieved through choosing only one end of the spectrum - polarities embrace both/and strategies.

**Step 2. Determine whether there is a polarity or a problem**

How a polarity is addressed is different from how a problem is solved; it is important to differentiate the two. This is not an easy concept to address. Each of the opposites are both true and conflicting. Think holistic synergies rather than isolated silos!

**Step 3. Describe the paradox: Create a polarity map**

A polarity map illustrates how solutions can cycle from one extreme to the other over time. To develop polarity maps, place two charts together. Web technologies and software help facilitate digital discussions. The mapping of polarities is an engaging, inclusive, and productive group process. The procedure I facilitate follows:

- Discover what individuals want to achieve, place information in the map's upper middle as the greater purpose statement, and establish clear understanding of desired and avoided outcomes.
- Name the two opposing elements and place titles on map in the boxes illustrated in **Figure 2**. Polarities must be stated in neutral terms, have positive connotations, and be interdependent. I elicit input for four quadrants - positive and negative aspects of left-side polarity; positive and negative aspects of right side polarity - and help individuals articulate fears and hopes associated with either pole.
- Acknowledge that during change, two extremes are likely to evolve: change champions and status quo advocates. Both are relevant. Be sure to illustrate infinity loop choices to depict decision tendencies typical with polarity dilemmas. This visually illustrates how the two spectrums can be integrated, rather than segregated. The mapping process helps simplify complexity.
- List actions to optimize polarities to achieve best aspects of both poles. The goal is to optimize the polarities, not to balance them.

![Figure 2. Polarity Map](image-url)
The infinity loop generated on the polarity map uses language from systems thinking of “virtuous” and “vicious” cycles. Polarities flow in predictable patterns and these “from/to” patterns are made visible with the mapping. This is valuable to help the group see this predictability.

Polarities have contradictory and interrelated elements that exist simultaneously over time and are seemingly opposing, yet connected. As organizations work towards individuation and integration of opposites, they achieve more systemic, holistic outcomes.

Closing Comments

As a global, strategic practitioner, I confidently state that polarity management methodology is an effective element of my organization development work. I teach the concept using an easy polarity to establish group connection—such as the inhale and exhale polarity—and demonstrate the mapping process in a large group discussion. This helps them see the necessity to embrace both multiple, seemingly conflicting truths. This method has served client systems well to enable them to see vicious cycles that trap them and to create strategic adjustments that move them to their future state. Remember upsides, downsides, implications, and actions! Let’s remind groups to think both/and rather than either/or! Through making the unconscious conscious in polarity discussions, organizations make more intentional, conscious choices with ambiguity as a viable, valuable option.

Gail Sacconey Townsend, PhD, consults and teaches in the public and private sector, is an organization development scholar practitioner at W. L. Gore & Associates, Inc., and is adjunct faculty at the University of Delaware. She is committed to increasing the effectiveness of individuals, teams, and organizations through engagement of diverse people in creative and energizing dialogue to achieve positive people and business results. Townsend can be reached at gtownsend@wlgore.com.
“Despite all efforts to attend to organizational and individual well-being, some individuals remain unsettled, unfulfilled, perpetually at odds with others, and in the margins of their work groups.”

The Forgotten Communities in Organizations

By Chandra Goforth Irvin

I was 15 and had already stolen a car. Well, not exactly. But that’s what my daddy, a respected Baptist preacher, said.

“Y’all wanna go?” was all Vanderbilt Brown had to say. He was the 18-year-old boy sitting in a brown GTO convertible, inviting my friends and me to a party across town. “Yeah! We wanna go!” chorused Linda and Ollie. “Where did you get that car?” we asked since no one we knew had a convertible.

The three of us had been complaining that we were bored when Vanderbilt pulled up. “Come on Chandra,” said Linda. Ollie, who was usually the most reserved, piped up “Yeah, let’s go.” “We won’t stay long” they promised me.

“What does it take to win your love for me?” by Junior Walker and the All Stars was blaring when we rolled up. It was a great party. Nearly everyone was there but now that I had seen them, especially Mrs. Chippey, I was ready to go. She worked with my mother, was part of the “village” that raised us, and probably knew I was not supposed to be there. Nervously, I looked for Vanderbilt and told him I needed to go home.

“We just got here.”
“I know, but I need to go.”

After 30 minutes Linda and Ollie were getting nervous. By colluding to keep me out, they’d get in trouble too. Our plan was simple, we’d take the car, get me home and they would come back before Vanderbilt missed the car. I didn’t have a license but I was in a hurry so I jumped into the driver’s seat, pulled into the gravel driveway, and turned left heading home.

It was only after I pulled out of the driveway onto the 2-lane highway, that I saw from the corner of my eye an 18-wheeler barreling down on us. I kept turning left and spun right into an open field. Our screams, the truck’s horn, and the dust were enough to stop the party. “Ooooooh” was all I could hear as everybody surrounded the car. When I got home, Daddy was waiting.

“Didn’t I tell you to stay here . . . ? Why were you hardheaded . . . ? Why were you stealing someone else’s car?”
“Just because Linda and Ollie . . .”
“Well Linda and Ollie . . .”. 

“No sir.”
“Well, stop doing what everyone else does.”
Then pausing and looking me in the eye he said, “Remember in your heart who you are. Think about what you are doing before you do it.”

“Very well.”

“Don’t just say that. Listen! Try to get your mind and heart right. Then be determined to do what you say and say what you mean. It won’t always be easy but if you ask God to help you, you can do it.”

“Why,” I wondered, “did I have to endure Daddy’s mini sermons?” All I wanted to do was be in community with others. It was much later when I realized Daddy was not opposed to me forming community with others. He just wanted me to also attend to the community I had forgotten.

Leaders devote considerable resources to developing community in organizations. Nevertheless, there are times when genuine community seems distant, even impossible. Despite all efforts to attend to organizational and individual well-being, some individuals remain unsettled, unfulfilled, perpetually at odds with others, and in the margins of their work groups. There might be any number of underlying reasons for this, however one fundamental cause is likely the forgotten inner community.

Who are the members of our inner community? They are: heart, mind, will and core self (soul).

Has your mind ever calculated a path that your heart and will refused to follow? Have you ever experienced your mind and will being determined to take action only to have your heart reject the idea? Such warring within ourselves limits our capacity to engage wholeheartedly in building community within self and with others. For instance, we may desire in our hearts and affirm in our being the importance of forming meaningful relations with those who are different from us (the Other) but our minds may calculate that forming those relationships could be too . . .

» Isolating—“I may lose fellowship with friends and family.”

» Costly—“I may lose my status or future opportunities.”

» Uncomfortable—“I don’t know how to engage with the Other, especially around difficult topics.”

» Risky—“I may be misunderstood, rejected, or embarrassed by the Other. I could make things worse.”

It is common to encourage individuals with these kinds of fears to ask themselves questions such as:

» What do I risk by being out of fellowship with the Other?

» How are my behaviors supporting or undermining my relations with the Other?

» How committed am I to the external community?

» What strengths can I bring to the community and how can I use these to build relations with the Other?

These are transactional/secular questions which help us assess our: engagement with the external community; commitment to the community; impact on others in the community and their impact on us. However, taken alone, such questions may result in our: being defined by others; not being true to self; forming superficial and shallow relations with others; and offering less than our true self to the external community. Genuine community requires more.

A voice of wisdom in community building, Howard Thurman, reminds us in Disciplines of the Spirit, that genuine community is formed when we attend to our external community and inner community. It is a polarity to leverage. Therefore, in addition to answering secular/transactional questions concerning our relations with our external community we must poll the members of our inner community and answer piercing transcending/spiritual questions about our true self and ultimate commitment, e.g.,

» Who am I really (not roles or affiliations)?

» To what am I ultimately committed?

» How are my behaviors advancing or undermining the thing to which I am ultimately committed?

» What am I ultimately committed to?

» What truths am I denying?

When transcending/spiritual questions are courageously and honestly explored and when we get a unanimous vote (not a mere plurality) of commitment from the inner community, we can begin to: better address our deeper fears; acknowledge and manage the fundamental needs driving our behaviors; claim and align our core values; and be freed to offer our true selves to our external community. Of course, if we attend to the inner community and neglect the external community we will: become too insular; become unrealistic about our role and contributions to the external community; undervalue others in the community; and not benefit from what the external community offers.

Howard Thurman, who exchanged ideas about human relations with Mahatma Gandhi and mentored many influential leaders including Martin Luther King Jr., underscores the vital and often forgotten role of the inner community in large scale community building. When individuals are encouraged to answer the transactional/secular and the transcendent/spiritual questions which foster commitment to their “external community and inner community,” wholeness in individuals and organizations and genuine community can result. On a much smaller scale, this was the lesson Daddy was trying to teach me. It was an important lesson in polarity thinking.
According to a Gallup Poll, negative conflict drains the U.S. economy by $350 billion a year in lost productivity and wasted energy. All of us have experienced destructive effects of mismanaged conflict personally and organizationally.

Conflict resolution can be improved when conflict is understood as inevitable and potentially positive. If the conflict mindset is “either/or” thinking, there is a “best” solution(s) that typically keeps an organization functional at the tactical level.

Conflict resolution can be enhanced when the conflict mindset includes both/and thinking, and conflict is understood as essential for innovation and resilience in turbulent times. Polarity Thinking provides that mindset and frames core conflictual interests as interdependent poles, both of which are needed for joint action toward a compelling common purpose. Agreements are more sustainable because all interests and fears are represented; there is an understanding that there is wisdom in the values from both poles; and action steps/early warnings can be easily adjusted for new realities. Polarity Thinking helps transform organizations at the strategic level and moves leaders beyond seeing conflict as only a problem to solve.

**Keys to Transformative Conflict**

Three distinctions are needed for transformative conflict:

» differences from conflicts;

» problems from polarities; and

» positions from real conflict issues.

**Differences.** Many people assume differences create conflict. More often than not, they prevent conflict. One team member has skills to include people in the team; another at long range planning. By talking about their strengths, they leverage their talent at the proper times.

**Problem to Solve.** An employee requested a pay raise. Manager and employee negotiated, reached agreement, and were surprised that work satisfaction did not improve. Neither sought the real interests that could have been status, recognition, or additional child care. Later they revisited the conflict and discerned that recognition was the core interest. Mutually, they arrived at written recognition of work projects sent to the business leader, an action which eventually led to a promotion.
Polarity to Leverage. In another organization, a chronic conflict continued between the CEO (Henry) who had a marketing background and the VP of R&D (Mark). Every time Henry made a suggestion, Mark focused on an urgent operational problem. They were stuck in either/or thinking. As a result, new ideas got little traction, and important quality issues went unaddressed. When the conflict was framed as a polarity, Realism AND Vision, both could see their own and the other’s interest as essential for a world-class biotech firm. They created common action steps and early warnings to meet both interests. A year-long conflict was resolved in three hours.

Kinds of Interests

To clarify interests for both problems and polarities, consider the following categories.

» **Content**: concrete issues
- Design for products
- Space
- Compensation

» **Relationship**: needs of all humans
- Inclusion
- Power
- Respect

» **Identity**: preferred image
- Smart
- Kind
- Tough

» **Processes**: getting things done
- Protocols
- Meetings
- Decision-making

Sample Questions to identify interests

1. What would be the perfect situation?
2. What occurred that led to your request?
3. What will it take for you to . . . ?
4. Why won’t you do . . . ?
5. When are you most irritated? Most satisfied?
6. What are two other ways you can get what you want?

In the salary example, asking “What prompted this request for a raise?” “What would change for you if you had a raise?” could have illuminated interests not previously seen.

**Sample Practices to Identify Interests**

Often, people have framed their interests as positions, don’t know their actual interests or won’t reveal them. Below are ways to decipher the real issues.

1. **Word choices.** Notice if people use words that signal a need for inclusion, competence, a process, etc.

   “You have asked 3 times who will be at the meeting. Do you want to be included?”
2. **Triggering events.** What happens prior to, or consistently in, a conflict provides clues to the underlying issues.

   A new CEO of a global organization demanded change to meet marketplace demands. Each time she insisted the most profitable business unit alter its business plan, key leaders in the business talked about the importance of culture for profitability. She labelled the leaders “outdated.” The greater the demands of the CEO, the greater resistance of the leaders. When the conflict was reframed as Stability AND Change, each could relax since all interests were represented. Even though each side strongly preferred one pole over the other, all knew they needed both poles to keep the best from the past and change the rest.

3. **Themes.** Themes can be picked up through jokes, stories, and images that emerge.

   “There are a lot of jokes about death. What is dying here?”

4. **Incongruent non-verbal.**

   “You said you agree but are still frowning. Is there something we have missed?”

5. **‘Gap’ statements.**

   “If only we had more X and less Y.”

   “There’s too much focus on fund-raising and not enough on our mission.” Not a problem to be solved but a polarity to leverage: Margin and Mission.

6. **Frustration** with the way things are.

   “So-and-so just doesn’t understand our concerns.”

   “I wonder how we can maintain some valued traditions as we move into the modern tech world?”

7. **Wisdom behind stereotypes.**

   » Activists press the need for change, and Traditionalists hold on to the past. A Past/Present AND Present/Future polarity map is useful here to show the ups and downs of the past, continuity to the future, and fears about that future direction.

   » Resistance contains wisdom.

   For financial viability, a hospice needed to merge into a regional umbrella organization. The nurses feared that the care would be compromised. When framed as **Caring and Continuity**, all parties had a place to stand and creative ideas emerged.

8. **Scapegoats:** usually hold one under-used pole.

   Jeff harps on decentralization: he’s concerned about slow response time with centralization. Transform the conflict: consider the upsides of both **decentralization and centralization** in the restructure for a sustainable organization.

**Conclusion**

We need a conflict process with the capacity to transform tension into positive sustainable outcomes. The matrix on the previous page, **Transforming the Power of a Stability and Change Polarity**, guides practitioners toward that goal.

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Table 1. **Transformative Conflict Matrix™**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sort the Issue</th>
<th>Ways to Resolve</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. No Conflict: Similarities that both can have, e.g., respect.</td>
<td>1. Action Steps that obtain the desired result.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. No Conflict: Differences that do not clash. One wants inclusion; another wants power.</td>
<td>2. Action Steps that obtain the desired results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Conflict: Problems to Solve</td>
<td>3. Set criteria for problem solving and choose solutions that meet the most interests or the most important interests. Remember you can compensate people who do not get the office space, e.g., inclusion in an important project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. One or more best solutions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Situation is not ongoing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example: People want the same office.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Conflict: Polarieties to Leverage</td>
<td>4. See, Map, and Leverage the polarity with action steps and early warnings. Emphasize the compelling common purpose. Notice what action steps are held in common and what steps still create tension. Generate steps that meet the most preferences and the greater purpose for all involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Interdependent values</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ongoing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Both poles critical for the greater purpose</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example: Stability AND Change</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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Elaine Yarbrough, PhD, is founder of The Yarbrough Group, consultants headquartered in Boulder, Colorado and Washington, DC. She is a Master in Polarity Thinking and also was Dean of the Mastery Program. She has published three books including **Artful Mediation: Constructive Conflict at Work**. She can be reached at elaine@yarbgroup.com.
Our identities, whether individual or organizational, are something we hold dear. Identity is the core of who we are and encompasses our values, our personality, our habitual ways of being and doing things, and our beliefs. Identity provides the strong foundation that enables our success. We tend to believe that identity is enduring, yet we all know that change is a given. What happens when who we’ve been up until now is not who we need to be to continue to thrive?

In using polarity thinking (PT) in my coaching and facilitation with individual leaders and teams, it is evident that PT is a powerful and impactful approach to supporting successful identity changes. While minimizing the stress and pain that often accompany such transformations, recognition of key polarities can facilitate the integration of core aspects of past identity along with the manifestation of essential, if less familiar, ways of being. In this short article, I share several examples of how understanding and leveraging polarities has contributed to the process of identity change for individual leaders and organizations.

Polarities?
A polarity is a pair of interdependent values where both are essential, where neither alone will engender sustained success over time.

» Whenever we feel a pull between competing values, and when that same pull seems to occur repeatedly, the likelihood is that we are experiencing a polarity.

» When we face a complex challenge, and there are factions on each side convinced that they are right, there is the possibility that both sides are indeed right, yet neither alone is sufficient. It is likely to be a polarity.

» When our organization adopts a set of values and they work for a while, but then no longer produce success, it’s possible that we have a polarity to leverage instead of a problem to solve.

A polarity requires Both/And thinking, which is different than a problem that can be solved with Either/Or thinking.

We all successfully manage many polarities in our lives and work. Results and Relationships, Individual and Team, Planning and Executing are examples of polarities that most of us deal with regularly. Some
polarities we don’t manage well, sometimes because we haven’t recognized that a polarity exists at all, or when we have a strong preference for one of the values and that causes us to neglect the other. As Barry Johnson, father of Polarity thinking, said succinctly: “Polarities are unavoidable, indestructible, and unsolvable.” Thus, a true polarity will routinely recur when we fail to acknowledge its existence.

Leveraging Polarities in Changing Organizational and Leader Identity

The impetus for identity change typically occurs when growth and greater complexity are at play and more is being demanded of us. The challenge of evolving identity is felt by all of us as we develop throughout our lives. The organizations we are part of also experience identity change. The language and practice of polarity thinking offers a powerful approach to successful identity change. Let me share some short vignettes to give you a flavor of what this looks like:

» A medium sized consulting company is challenged by its communication practices and lack of processes as it grows in size. Leaders have long held on to the brand of being agile and welcoming input from every single employee. Yet the leadership team is realizing that more people makes agility and inclusive decision-making far more challenging. Leaders wonder whether growth will cause them to sacrifice their core identity. As they engage in individual reflection and team coaching and dialogue, leaders recognize that they don’t have to give up on being agile and open to input. Using tools such as the Tannenbaum-Schmidt decision-making authority continuum, they begin to note that decisions need not always be participative, nor are they always made at the top. Rather, the identity change required is that they embody the entire range of decision-making authority and gain the benefit of:
  • Participative Decision-making AND Directive Decision-making
  • Agility AND Standardization

» As the leadership team begins to create processes and routines that enable greater ease and less stress, one leader observes: “This isn’t so bad. I actually have the bandwidth to be creative when some things are clear and consistent.” Others still struggle to adapt, noting that creating policies and procedures is time-consuming. Desired identity: we manage what we know works well, and we collaborate to creatively respond to new challenges.

» A leader new to her position in a large technology company believes she can continue to focus on others in her new role. Long recognized for her commitment to the job and for being a “people person,” it hadn’t occurred to her that this new leadership role may challenge her established identity. Why delegate when you can do it yourself and avoid overwhelming others with too many demands? Can’t she continue to be a selfless leader? Coaching this leader involved posing questions such as: “What is the cost, to your team and to you, of never delegating?” “What behaviors are most important to hold on to as you evolve?” and “How will your team let you know the impact of these changes?” As she became aware that focusing on herself does not mean she cannot also focus on others, she embraced a new identity: being a leader who cares for others AND takes care of herself. This is more sustainable in her new role.

» A medium-sized company in the construction industry is shifting its core businesses. The company wants to ensure that it focuses its resources on continued excellence. That means some business units will close and it won’t be possible to absorb all the people affected. The company, long known for its loyalty to its people, is faced with a change in identity. Through it’s not easy, they transform themselves by consciously leveraging several key polarities:
  • Care for the People AND Care for the Business
  • Short-term Focus AND Long-term Focus
To honor their value of people, they support leaving employees in finding their next jobs. The evolving identity: creatively leading through changing times and being a positive example for others in our industry.

For each of these clients, an identity change that leveraged key polarities meant that their identities were enhanced rather than left behind or destroyed. The Both/And approach of polarity thinking created a bridge from a treasured identity that had served them well to an identity that was more flexible in meeting newly emerging challenges. Embracing polarity thinking ensures that the process of the next identity change will be met with awareness and greater facility and confidence.

Ann V. Deaton, PhD, PCC, coaches leaders, teams, and organizations experiencing significant change and growth. Deaton earned her doctorate in Clinical Psychology at The University of Texas, and her Leadership Coaching Certification from the Newfield Network. A member of the Polarities Mastery VI learning community, Deaton can be reached at Ann@wecanbounce.com.
Embracing the Reality and Possibility of Transitions

By Kelly Lewis

Transitions are beautifully hard. They can be initiated by a situation not of our choosing or inspired by a possibility of our liking. Some are long and drawn out while others are short and swift. Often, they feel chaotic and messy and we try our hardest to make them neat and tidy. For most of us, they are easier to think about than to experience. For all of us, transitions are an invitation to wholeheartedly embrace reality and unequivocally step into possibility.

Early this spring, I was invited into a long, messy, beautifully hard transition by a situation not of my choosing. I am grateful that I said “yes” to this invitation even though it is easier to grasp intellectually than to experience emotionally. Through this article, I would like to invite you into my transition and my learnings to date; I hope it supports and perhaps challenges you (and your clients) to navigate the transitions you are experiencing.

This particular transition knocked on my door one Tuesday afternoon in late April. I was in the midst of doing work I love—co-facilitating a two-day intensive on Relationships and Leadership with a group of incredibly caring and competent leaders. We had just finished a delightful lunch in the blooming gardens of our nurturing venue when I checked my phone. There was a text from my older sister, Lisa, telling me to call her ASAP. My sister had accompanied my mom to a doctor’s appointment earlier that day. The sinking feeling in my stomach told me that appointment had everything to do with her text. I gave Lisa a call before our afternoon session. Her voice was shaky, which made the sinking feeling I had grown even stronger. Lisa went on to tell me that mom had been diagnosed with Bulbar ALS, a debilitating and unpredictable disease that has no cure. I remember sitting down, speechless, with a knowing that everything had just changed. My first reaction was to hide. To hide in the comfort of work I love with clients I had fallen in love with. Yet somewhere even deeper down in my gut I knew I needed to go be with my mom and sisters.

Despite my impulse, I chose being uncomfortable that afternoon. I entrusted our clients to the capable hands of my talented partner and drove to my mom’s. We sat with silence, the unknown, and some hard questions, none of which we had answers to. I sat with the tension (within myself and within my family) between the desire to stay hopeful and the need to be honest. A beautiful thing happened that afternoon. We took our first step toward embracing this new reality with openness...
and courage and a new intimacy, closeness, and connection emerged.  
As the weeks went on and the shock wore off, I could see the tension I was experiencing was a polarity to be leveraged. I was aware that I was being whisked away from my happy place of being energized by possibilities and was at risk of denying what was real. I feared that gloom and doom would set in. I was concerned we would have to make decisions before we got to explore all the different options. I got really stuck. Thankfully, I had enough awareness to ask for support. I invited a small group of loved ones and trusted colleagues into my process. To this day, each of them continues to support and encourage me as I navigate the tension between embracing what is and embracing what could be. I am listening deeply to the questions being asked and the offers being made. I am noticing the way people are walking alongside me and I am walking alongside my mom—without a need to survive the transition but to thrive in and through the transition and perhaps even because of the transition.

As we all know, my family and I are not alone. Letting go of what was, honestly embracing what is, and bravely stepping into an unknown future is an intense dynamic that organizations, leaders, and human beings navigate daily. I have been experimenting with this framework to support both individual and organizational clients for the last six months. The transitions my clients are navigating range from changing roles to changing administrations. Across the board a particular learning has been consistent—when we see this as a polarity to be leveraged, we gift each other and ourselves with the space, perspective, and choices needed to honor and navigate the inherent tension in all transitions.

Some additional learning to date include:

> The value of telling the truth (without judgment) about the present is awareness, acceptance, freedom, and humility.
> The value of imagining what is possible yields an energy and enthusiasm about what could be.
> The need to face fears of being uninspired or without control, or to acknowledge the overwhelming chaos of unlimited possibilities.
> The need to embrace reality wholeheartedly, especially when there is a strong preference for the possibility of the future. Alternatively, the need to wholeheartedly embrace the possibilities when there is an affinity towards the practicality of reality and how things are currently done. Reality without possibility feels like gloom and doom. Possibility without reality feels like Pollyanna.

> The value of supplementing either-or thinking with great big both/and thinking, which allows movement toward more inclusive viewpoints, a deeper understanding of others, and a more honest sense of reality.
> The value of experiencing the gift of presence, of being accompanied in the joys and sorrows of leadership, life, and transitions. Leaders, too, must extend grace to themselves and to others in order to move forward.

As students and teachers of transitions, we need to work with both what is real and what is possible. The inclusive embrace of both offers us the opportunity to not only survive the transition but to thrive in and through the transition and perhaps even because of the transition.

### Table 1. Coaching Questions to Support the Reality and Possibility of Transitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Embracing Reality:</th>
<th>Embracing Possibility:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is true now?</td>
<td>What is possible now?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is also true?</td>
<td>What is also possible?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is most important?</td>
<td>What do I want?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What am I grateful for?</td>
<td>What am I hopeful about?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What am I scared of?</td>
<td>What am I concerned about?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is there to learn?</td>
<td>What am I ready to let go of?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What am I avoiding?</td>
<td>What do I need to move forward?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Kelly Lewis is the principal of Lewis Leadership Group, a leadership development and coaching firm. As an Executive Coach and Leadership Consultant she works with variety of leaders and organizations to find more meaning in and movement from their leadership. Lewis serves on the faculty of Georgetown University’s Institute for Transformational Leadership. She can be reached at klewis@ttlgroup.com.
“A lesson we learned was that where we looked to take advantage of the polarity paradigm, it always added value by ensuring we didn’t get caught in an either/or mindset when, if we looked deeper, there were underlying polarities.”

Practicing OD—
Applying Polarity Thinking to Complex Societal Issues

By Chief Greg Mullen, Margaret Seidler, Jake Jacobs, and Chandra Irvin

We are at a pivotal moment in our country as it relates to police trust and legitimacy. To do nothing is not an option; to engage in a journey that has been challenging, risky, and has the potential to inform generations to come has been our responsibility and honor.

—Police Chief Greg Mullen, City of Charleston, SC

We experience the tension and conflict existing in complex systems all around us—companies, governments, families, and communities. In this case study, we explore the application of Polarity Thinking to a community tension in Charleston, South Carolina—a tension that is sadly present in most cities and towns across America. We italicize the many polarities we leveraged throughout this work.

Purpose

The project was designed to leverage a number of polarities:

» Bring together all parts of the community AND foster engagement and civil dialogue in support of a common Greater Purpose.

» This Greater Purpose was to further strengthen and broaden collaboration between the city of Charleston police AND the citizens they serve.

» Two key societal values (also called a Polarity) guided our work: Public Safety AND Individual Rights.

» Our intent was to help citizens see the whole picture AND recognize that the two poles are interconnected, needed and with expected tension.

» Moving from reactive to proactive lessens damaging and harmful reactions between police AND the community and creates sustainable positive relationships between police AND the community.

The Process

The Illumination Project process unfolded over a twelve-month period in five phases, each aimed at best leveraging the polarities to achieve the Greater Purpose.

Phase 1: Planning and Developing the Project

We identified a project plan and built a strong client and consultant relationship. We also identified the core polarities below...
and drafted maps for them with our consulting team and primary client, the Chief of Police. In doing so we wanted to test our assumption that these polarities would be central to the work ahead that would engage police and citizens in improving their relationship. They passed the test.

**Core Polarities Leveraged in This Phase:**
- Public Safety AND Civil Liberties
- Respect for Law AND Respect for People

**Phase 2:**
**Developing the Steering Group**
The Steering Group consisted of 22 members, a diverse group of key community stakeholders from neighborhoods, businesses, education, faith-based organizations, community activists, law enforcement, media, and others. Literally we were working with a multarity of 22 when we defined the poles as points of view of those in the Group. Each had their unique experience with police and citizens that shaped their perceptions. While it was possibly easier to reduce the complexity by withholding a few invitations, we would do so at our own peril. Leave a stakeholder out of a process like this and you will likely find yourself surprised by a polarity emerging later in the process that you wished you had been aware of earlier.

Merely inviting this diverse group was only an ante that allowed us to “stay at the table.” We needed to design activities and facilitate conversations where everyone had an opportunity for their voice to be heard. This was an intentional leveraging of the Listening AND Talking polarity—an essential one for this effort since so many had been allowed to say so little, as many people of color in the city had felt marginalized by society for so long.

**Phase 3:**
**Engaging the Community**
“Listening Sessions” were the heartbeat of the Illumination Project. This name is a good example of polarities needing to be understood in context. Plenty of polarities are implicitly at work in common terms. The Listening AND Talking polarity has two poles: the one pole is the other person to whom you are speaking; the other is the entire country. With this understanding, the Listening Sessions and the Steering Group, every person connected to the project received ongoing lessons in applying this powerful paradigm.

Polarity Thinking is a foundation for positive change and was explained to the Steering Group and at each Listening Session.

**Phase 4:**
**Evaluating the Project**
The College of Charleston’s Joseph P. Riley, Jr., Center for Livable Communities, our research partner, conducted a baseline assessment of citizen and police perceptions of each other. Questions for the assessment were derived from a set of polarities identified by the Steering Group and Chief as being central to the citizen and police relationship. A lesson we learned was that where we looked to take advantage of the polarity paradigm, it always added value by ensuring we didn’t get caught in an either/or mindset when, if we looked deeper, there were underlying polarities. While there is always a call for “Action” in efforts like this one, we realized that is only one pole. The easiest other pole to define would be “Planning.” We found that framing Planning broadly enabled us to include the research work that will be so vital to testing our hypothesis that applying a polarity-based approach to complex societal issues is a promising path to pursue.

**Phase 5:**
**Providing a Model for the Rest of the Nation**
While there is, and needs to remain a strong focus on work being done in Charleston, the city alone is only one pole—the other is the entire country. With police and citizen tragedies appearing on the news at all, let alone as frequently as they have, success in Charleston is
far short of what is needed. This polarity was foreseen at the inception of the Illumination Project, so much so that providing a national model was in the very first list of measures of success.

Conclusion

We were faced with a multitude of points of view and positions held passionately by a wide variety of stakeholders. Our bringing a polarity lens to these situations made it easier for others (and ourselves) to affirm the differences (poles) and discover common goals (Greater Purpose Statement). In addition to the polarities described above those below enabled us to create virtuous circles of increased trust, a deeper understanding of legitimate, respectful police authority and citizen responsibility to do their part in creating a safe city.

We have been honored to work on this project and to use a Polarity Lens to do so. Many more people in Charleston are familiar with Polarity Thinking, to their benefit AND the benefit of the city as a whole.

Robert “Jake” Jacobs has been supporting companies, communities, and countries create their preferred futures faster and more sustainably than they ever thought possible. He was honored to be on the Illumination Project consulting team. He can be reached at jake@realtimestrategicchange.com.

Margaret Seidler has worked in organization and community systems using Polarity Thinking™ to energize the power of “both/and” collaborative thinking for better, more sustainable results. She is the author of Power Surge, HRD Press 2008. She can be reached at margaret@margaretseidler.com.

Gregory G. Mullen has served as the city of Charleston, SC’s Chief of Police since 2006 and has embraced Polarity Thinking™ for the past six years to create a safe and supportive community. In 2016, he became the first ever Honorary Polarities-in-Practice Master. He can be reached at mulleng@charleston-sc.gov.

Chandra Goforth Irvin, Director for Peace and Restorative Services, frequently draws on polarity thinking and the transformative and timeless wisdom of Howard Thurman to support individuals, couples and organizations seeking spiritual renewal, inward liberation, and social transformation. She can be reached at cirvin@spalding.edu.

All of the authors are Masters in Polarity Thinking.
Organization Development in Practice brings together experienced OD professionals who share their methods for developing more effective and resilient organizations, enabling organizational and social change, and being responsive to continuous change.

Some of the chapters include:

**The Ebb and Flow of OD Methods**
*Billie T. Alban* and *Barbara Benedict Bunker* describe the first and second wave of OD methods and their perspective on what is happening in the 21st century. When OD methods first emerged in the 1960s, they were considered innovative and exciting. OD practitioners have shifted their methods with time and adapted to current situations. However, Alban and Bunker question which of the current methods are new and which are just a repackaging of already existing practices. As the pace of change has accelerated, they also wonder whether the turbulent external environment has driven many to think they need new methods when what they may need is more creative adaptation of existing methods.

**How the Mind-Brain Revolution Supports the Evolution of OD Practice**
*Teri Eagan*, *Julie Chesley*, and *Suzanne Lahl* believe that the early promise of OD was inspired by a desire to influence human systems towards greater levels of justice, participation, and excellence. They propose that a critical and integrative neurobiological perspective holds the potential to advance OD in two ways: what we do—the nature and quality of our ability to assess and intervene in service of more effective organizations and a better world; and who we are—our competencies, resilience, and agility as practitioners.

**Culture of Opportunity: Building Resilient Organizations in a Time of Great Transition**
*Mark Monchek*, *Lynnea Brinkerhoff*, and *Michael Pergola* explore how to foster resiliency, the ability to respond effectively to change or challenges. They examine the inherent potential of resilient organizations to reinvent themselves by understanding their social networks, using design thinking, and utilizing

the fundamentals of action research in a process called the Culture of Opportunity that leverages the talent, relationships, knowledge, capital, and communications that are largely fragmented and disconnected in most organizations. They outline the process of instilling a Culture of Opportunity within three distinct organizations that hit crisis points in response to changing environments and difficult circumstances.

**At the Crossroads of Organization Development and Knowledge Management**
*Denise Easton* describes what emerges at the intersection of OD and Enterprise Knowledge Management, where a collaborative partnership accelerates the understanding, development, and transformation of dynamic, techno-centric systems of knowledge, information, learning, and networks found in 21st century organizations. When OD is part of developing knowledge management processes, systems, and structures the organization not only survives but thrives.

**Accelerating Change: New Ways of Thinking about Engaging the Whole System**
*Paul D. Tolchinsky* offers new ways of developing, nurturing, and leveraging intrapreneurship in organizations. Most organizations underutilize the capabilities and the entrepreneurial spirit of employees. Tolchinsky describes how to unleash the entrepreneurial energy that exists in most companies. In addition, he offers five suggestions organizations can implement, drawing on several examples from corporations such as Zappos, FedEx, HCL Technologies, and companies developing internal Kick Starters and crowd sourcing platforms.
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The OD Practitioner (ODP) is published by the Organization Development Network. The purpose of the ODP is to foster critical reflection on OD theory and practice and to share applied research, innovative approaches, evidence based practices, and new developments in the OD field. We welcome articles by authors who are OD practitioners, clients of OD processes, Human Resource staff who have partnered with OD practitioners or are practicing OD, and academics who teach OD theory and practice. As part of our commitment to ensure all OD Network programs and activities expand the culture of inclusion, we encourage submissions from authors who represent diversity of race, gender, sexual orientation, religious/spiritual practice, economic class, education, nationality, experience, opinion, and viewpoint.

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Content
» Bridges academic rigor and relevance to practice
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» Includes cases, illustrations, and practical applications
» References sources for ideas, theories, and practices
» Reflects OD values: respect and inclusion, collaboration, authenticity, self-awareness, and empowerment.

Stylistic
» Clearly states the purpose and content of the article
» Presents ideas logically and with clear transitions
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» Avoids jargon and overly formal expressions
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If the article is accepted for publication, the author will receive a PDF proof of the article for final approval before publication. At this stage the author may make only minor changes to the text. After publication, the Editor will send the author a PDF of the article and of the complete issue of ODP in which the article appears.

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Preparing the Article for Submission

Article Length
Articles are usually 4,000 – 5,000 words.

Citations and References
The ODP follows the guidelines of the American Psychological Association Publication Manual (6th edition). This style uses parenthetical reference citations within the text and full references at the end of the article. Please include the DOI (digital object identifier; http://www.apastyle.org/learn/faqs/what-is-doi.aspx), if available, with references for articles in a periodical.

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Graphics that enhance an article are encouraged. The ODP reserves the right to resize graphics when necessary. The graphics should be in a program that allows editing. We prefer graphics to match the ODP’s three-, two-, or one-column, half-page or full-page formats. If authors have questions or concerns about graphics or computer art, please contact the Editor.

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Authors should email articles to the editor, John Vogelsang, at jvogelsang@earthlink.net. The deadlines for submitting articles are as follow: October 1 for the winter issue; January 1 for the spring issue; April 1 for the summer issue; and July 1 for the fall issue.