

Organization Development Review

JOURNAL OF THE ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

ISSN 2640-0650

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Organization Development Review

Published quarterly
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Organization Development Network, Inc.
ISSN 2640-0650

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In the Midst of Change

Welcome to our 3rd issue for 2020. What a year it has been! Almost everything we know and understand has had some disruption or is drastically changing. And many in OD are working hard helping people and organizations navigate transformations and completely new creations.

This changing context has also interfered with the operation of our Journal. Submissions have been more limited, review processes have been inconsistent, as have revision processes, and we have all been distracted too often. I am sorry for the uneven publication of issues this year. We are working on many strategies, structures, processes, relationships, roles, responsibilities, and operational expectations to improve how the *OD Review* runs. More on that later.

Judith Katz, Ph.D., has been part of our Board as long as I can remember and is now retiring from the Journal. As of 9/30 she has completed her last review for us. THANK YOU JUDITH! Judith was always one of the best we have experienced and over the years she has helped many others in our paired review process. We will miss her and honor her service in making this Journal one of the best!

New Board Members

In this issue, we will begin introducing our newest Board Members and will continue until our latest additions have been properly introduced. Some will replace people who have left over time and others will expand and balance our perspectives, experiences, demographics, and generations. Some new members will still be added into 2021.

Former Editors

Larry Porter	1973–1981
Raymond Weil	1982–1984
Don & Dixie Van Eynde	1985–1988
David Noer	1989–1992
Celeste Coruzzi	1993–1995
David Nicoll	1996–2000
Marilyn E. Blair	2000–2008
John D. Vogelsang	2009–2019

Following our new member introductions, we will begin introducing and thanking our existing Board Members, many who have been involved over decades. These will appear in our issues over 2021.

New Editorial Structure

We are also introducing our first Associate Editors to help as we improve how we function, expand the Journal's outreach and reputation, help to grow submissions and work with Board members and others to bring our best ideas forward and provide the Journal that helps OD as a field and valuable impact in how we live and work.

Please welcome **Lisa Meyer, Marc Sokol, and Norm Jones!**

New Submission Guidelines

Since the change of name, a couple years ago, we have not clarified much about who we want to be, our purpose and charter, so that is part of our update. Additionally, we need to assist authors with clear guidelines of what we publish and how submissions should be offered and what we won't publish. Some members of the Board and the new Associate Editors have helped in shaping this version being published in this issue. It will also be updated on the OD Network website under Publications.

Some Plans for the Future

I have spent many years on the Review Board and with 4 different Editors, starting in about 1993. There have been various initiatives along the way, but I am aware of some agendas we have kicked around a bit, but still need to work on. A few of the tasks we will look for help from our Board and other resources include:

- » ODR in more University Libraries
- » ODR with a larger, global readership
- » ODR indexed, citation tracked and raised in reputation and usage
- » Issue and article download sale options
- » Bundling from our extensive and historic archives to create readers on valuable topics
- » Rethinking what awards are offered from the Journal

Overview of the Issue

Mee-Yan Cheung-Judge has provided us with a new encapsulation of our field's work on competencies and how and why it has stayed a challenge. And in her hopes for our field has suggested some new directions for refreshing and pursuing less debate about all the 'whats' and a different process forward. This is a central topic for the professionalism of our field and is worthy of our attention and especially our next generations.

To add other perspectives and thinking to her comprehensive start, we invited a variety of people in our field and received 7 responses to enhance our thinking. You can communicate with the author and responders and can also send any comments to me at editor@odnetwork.org.

Debra Orr and Mark Seter tackle workplace bullying as a costly and psychologically devastating human system issue. With an extensive background and literature basis, they create greater clarity of the phenomena involved and draw on some OD to provide options to assist or resolve the debilitating aftermath. This article provides a look into a difficult problem for which OD thinking and skills can help.

Bob Gulick and Leslie Yerkes have written about a case with a non-profit that made good use of Appreciative Inquiry. They discuss the lead up and preparation steps, followed by how the stages of AI took place and what happened. The consultant in the case adds some reflective thoughts at the end. Articles like this can be helpful for learning what goes into our work and some of the choices that need to be made.

Bruce Greenbaum, Abraham (Rami) Shani, and Roberto Verganti have shared some new thinking on an approach to transformation called Radical Circles. They draw on their research and practice with examples and findings. It's an alternative to our history of top-down everything. This process starts with employees and works through a common sequence of stages until it attracts some leadership support and resources and begins real transformation.

Julian Allen, Sachin Jain, and Allan Church have provided some new thinking on how surveys, and particularly pulse surveys, can inform change and help set strategic direction. The current context, driving more rapid needs, also weighed into their thinking. This article helps learning by holding true to evidence-based, data-driven change with some modifications to typical large-scale surveys that is often untimely or not integrated well with organization strategic directions.

And from our wonderful archives, we've included a few articles with some timeliness for today. The first three shorter pieces came from a 2008 issue and were part of a section called "Trends We Must Not Ignore." **Peter Block** kicks it off with "Nothing is New" where he outlines some key global trends and OD trends that respond. Of course, these are still or more relevant today. **Fred Miller** adds insight with "A Need to Connect" in which he discusses how critical it is to connect and the types of 'walls' that get in the way. Then, **Maya Townsend, Barbara Christian, Jo-Ann Hague, Deb Peck, Michael Ray,**

and **Bauback Yeganeh** tell us about "OD Gets Wired." They write about three facts of life in the wired world: (1) People are radically connected, (2) Collaboration trumps control, and (3) We live in complex and constantly changing ecosystems.

The next archives come from 2013. **Loni Davis** shares work from her dissertation data on "Mobile Work Practices, Blurring Boundaries and Implications for OD." In this article, she talks about work not being spatially and temporally bounded, how employees and managers began decoupling work and place, as well as, when, and new work norms and tensions developing.

Finally, we have selected one from the late **Lisa Kimball** entitled "A Powerful Distinction: How the Simple–Complicated–Complex Continuum Contributes to OD Practice." Lisa was long one of the best in our field on complexity science and its implications for OD. In this article, she discusses the continuum from simple to complex and its usefulness in OD for change, communications and culture.

In the **Case Study** section for this issue **Therese Yaeger** and **Peter Sorenson** bring us a new and timely case on "A Call for Diversity at Palos Production." Along with the three practitioners providing responses and suggestions, they deal with the issue of creating a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable work environment.

Practicing OD

Editors: Stacey Heath, Deb Peters, and Rosalind Spiegel

In the ***Practicing OD*** section for this issue, we have 3 articles. **Priya Vasudevan** contributes "Infusing OD Values in Talent Development and Succession Planning." **Lori Wieters, Kathy Wenzlau, and Lindsay Perez** discuss "The Power of a 360-Degree Program Evaluation for a Nonprofit Organization," and **Julian Chender** provides "The OD Salon: Building a Dialogic Container to Advance the Field through Social Connection."

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“Once key stakeholders experienced OD in *being*, they became more open to OD approaches, for example, co-creation versus expert advice, diagnosis-based solutions versus generic best practices, and patience with the pace of interventions versus quick fixes.”

Infusing OD Values in Talent Development and Succession Planning

By Priya Vasudevan

I am an HR leader and OD practitioner, currently working as head of India HR in a Fortune 100 global organization. I have often struggled with bringing OD concepts and processes into organizations. In my current organization, as I was onboarded, I noticed several areas that called for an OD approach. My suggestions to bring in OD, however, were met with skepticism. I found that embodying OD values in addition to using theories, frameworks, and orientation, eventually brought about greater acceptance of OD in practice. Once key stakeholders experienced OD in *being*, they became more open to OD approaches, for example, co-creation versus expert advice, diagnosis-based solutions versus generic best practices, and patience with the pace of interventions versus quick fixes.

Captured below is a case of infusing OD values and principles into talent development for succession planning and achieving clear positive outcomes over a two-year cycle. This success paved the way for an OD approach to be utilized more intentionally in the organization.

Dilemmas in Talent Development and Succession Planning

Having had the good fortune to work with some leading organizations, I have often wondered about the pragmatism of succession planning and validity of talent development for successor roles. Some of the dilemmas I have noticed are:

- » How to keep the process dynamic?
In a VUCA environment, by the time the talent assessment and development or succession planning processes were completed, the talent landscape had shifted—rendering the plans less relevant.
- » How do organizations sustain employee energy and engagement in the process of talent development? Those identified as top talent received significant investment of development dollars and yet they did not remain focussed on a long-term development journey.
- » How can the responsibility of development be shared by all stakeholders? As HR teams run the talent development and succession planning, line

managers of top talent often become less involved in actively supporting them on their development journey.

Infusing OD Values and Competencies

Begin where the client is. This young and growing organization was in a very competitive talent market and experienced significant attrition yet there was no formal program to develop talent for succession or career movement. Promotions were highly sought after by employees. Candidates were many and the promotions slots few. Promotion decisions were made by senior management after review of managers'

A need was felt for a fair and scientific process to make promotion decisions. Out of the several options for an assessment tool, the Development Centre (DC) was selected to evaluate the potential of candidates. By acknowledging the organization's current state and employees' dissatisfaction, we were able to introduce a new process for evaluation and promotion.

recommendation for each candidate. These promotion decisions would result in disengagement and even attrition of high performing talent who were not promoted. A need was felt for a fair and scientific process to make promotion decisions. Out of the several options for an assessment tool, the Development Centre (DC) was selected to evaluate the potential of candidates. By acknowledging the organization's current state and employees' dissatisfaction, we were able to introduce a new process for evaluation and promotion.

Create a psychological safe space. DC involves evaluation and employees often equate being evaluated with being judged. To prepare the employees, we held orientation sessions to familiarize the participants with the DC process, framework of assessment, and the neutrality of the assessors. Excitement and energy rose when they realized that this was an objective approach. The CEO's assurance on how he benefited

from a similar process earlier in his career supported the DC's acceptance. The objectivity of the DC approach combined with a thoughtful introduction created a sense of safety and even anticipation.

Practice an authentic yet non-reactive presence. DC reports and outcomes created a stir. Despite all the preparation, some participants reacted adversely to the DC report as it contradicted their views of themselves. The OD value of presence made it possible for me to understand my own emotional hot buttons and remain emotionally detached while staying authentically engaged with members of the group.

Mirror the diagnosis and enable informed choice. The DC findings were shared directly with top management for decision making on promotions without review by managers. Top management deliberated on whether to believe or disbelieve findings. Interestingly despite differences, after reviewing the competency scores and discussing recommendations, the group came to a consensus to go with the findings. They dropped their biases about candidates in the face of evidence. Decisions for promotions and successors were made in an informed manner.

Facilitate Appreciative Inquiry-based curiosity. Each participant then undertook an Individual Development Planning (IDP) process based on a three-way conversation between the employee, the manager, and the HR representative. The HR representative facilitated the conversation eliciting strengths and dreams (career aspirations) of the employee through a

generative dialogue, buoyant with positive energies. The IDP was made on a 1-year planning horizon with elements of education, experience, and exposure in balanced measure.

Shape the ecosystem to sustain the process. Development plans, created with best of intentions, tended to lose momentum in the face of competing priorities. To sustain the focus on development, a quarterly catchup conversation was instituted between the employee, manager and HR representative. Progress was applauded and lags examined. This was also an opportunity for the stakeholders to renew their commitment to the IDP. The onus of development shifted firmly to the employee with the manager supporting their progress, and the HR representative facilitating the conversations.

Engage social narrative to support the practice. Participants of the DC process were collectively termed Key Talent Pool. They received monthly updates on the progress of their collective development journeys, and curated articles on leadership topics. This induced a sense of shared progress and pride. A formal document, Career Advancement Guidelines, that captured the promotion and development process was published on the employee portal. New joiners went through the Career Advancement Guidelines as part of their onboarding, which contributed to the social narrative.

Leverage change advocates and leadership evangelists. In the subsequent talent cycle, some key talent who were managers had their team members experience DC and resultant development journeys. The key talent enthusiastically stepped into the conversation as managers, modelling their own three-way conversations. Members of senior management who had initial inhibitions about DC, witnessed their own team members developing and actively participated in their development journeys. In talent cycles and orientation sessions for new participants, they became leadership evangelists.

Enhance the system's capacity to deal with change. As the organization contemplated institutionalising work from home (WFH) as a result of COVID-19, it adopted a collaborative approach by constituting a task force (many of them members of key talent pool) to make key decisions. Facilitated by an OD practitioner, the task force gathered data from various employee groups, analysed common themes, addressed concerns and arrived at WFH guidelines and governance that were widely accepted within the organization.

Conclusion

As this case demonstrates, talent development and succession planning improved in process and outcomes when OD values and models were applied. When the OD practitioner's enthusiasm to implement OD concepts was met with discomfort in the client system, an organic way of benefiting the system was by embodying OD values and competencies as a 'way of being' first and then in a 'manner of doing.'

Priya Vasudevan leads Human Resources at Liberty General Insurance, Mumbai (India). She is an OD practitioner, member of Indian Society of Applied Behavioural Sciences (ISABS), Executive Coach (Appreciative Coaching), and a Past Life Regression (PLR) practitioner. Priya can be reached on priya.vasudevan1903@gmail.com.