

ODSPOT

Centre for Organisation Development **Newsletter**

Summer Edition

Welcome to ODSPOT

Welcome to our newsletter, ODSpot - a forum for discussion about issues relating to Organisation Development. We encourage your contribution and feedback.

ODspot will highlight your workplace initiatives, innovative programs, along with industry developments, academic research and practical tips. As well, we will bring you an insight into the nature of the work we do at the Centre for Organisation Development.

Please send any ideas, articles or comments to Andrew Macdonald at andrew@cfod.com.au

We look forward to hearing from you!

Cultivating Change with **Coaching**

Coaching is Being There. You may have seen the Peter Sellers' film about the gardener who becomes President of the USA. In answer to

weighty political questions, Sellers' character gives simple gardening answers about planting, nurturing, fertilising and harvesting to achieve results. An organisation is a living organism, much like a garden, rather than a mechanical structure. The people within this living organism are encouraged to develop independently in a supportive environment. Coaching

has a central role in that environment. A coach, like a gardener, is there to plant, nurture and fertilise so people can thrive, regardless of mistakes or setbacks, throughout their learning process. For the person being coached (the coachee), coaching facilitates the enhancement of performance, self-directed learning and personal growth.

'The emergence of the knowledge-based economy requires managers to learn to act as "coaches". In a knowledge-based economy, a company must be more innovative to keep up with the accelerated speed of change, and its workforce must acquire the learning skills that will foster innovativeness in the company. Managers can help achieve these goals if they learn how to coach their subordinates... and not merely manage tasks, but facilitate the functioning of work teams.' HR Focus, January 1996

The coach's job is to challenge the coachee to create and maintain change that enables them to pursue their own fulfilment based on their values. The coach's role is to be the 'unreasonable friend':

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to give feedback, encourage, cajole, celebrate success and reframe failure as fast-paced learning.

There are a number of different types of coaching. Some are used within workplaces and some outside workplaces:

- Performance or skills coaching: time management, business development.
- Career coaching: career transition, development and outplacement.
- Strategic coaching: the coach acts as a sounding board with senior executives.
- Life coaching: life issues, work/life balance, sorting out finances.

An effective coach questions values, assumptions, beliefs and expectations and in so doing raises awareness for the coachee and facilitates their self-paced learning.

A good coach is someone who is:

- Self aware
- 'Present' for the coachee
- Clear on their own goals
- Committed to their own learning

Coaching cultivates change – it doesn't drive it.

Mike Allen heads a team of coaches and mentors who provide support to individuals and organisations. Call our office for details.

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What is OD? Sy

Organisation development is a recent development in Australia and we at CfOD are often asked to explain how it is different from traditional HR functions. OD has been around as a discipline for 40 years, but has gained mainstream acceptance in Australia only recently.

OD needs to be seen at the strategic level in organisational life – not the operational level.

Organisation development is the fundamental connectedness of everything to everything else in an organisation. It is a systems thinking approach that applies to the strategy, structure and processes of the entire system, such as an organisation, a department, a team or a work group. It encompasses all that goes on in a workplace, including the people relationships.

Systems thinking – frogs and bikes

One way of understanding systems thinking in organisations is to use Alistair Mant's metaphor of the frog and the bicycle. Bikes and frogs are different kinds of systems and the capacity to distinguish between them is where OD sits. The essential difference between the frog and the bicycle (viewed as systems) lies in the relationship of the parts to the whole. You can dismantle a bike into its component parts; examine it, replace or refine some of the parts; put it back together and it will still work as a bike.

The frog is different. Once you have removed a part, the entire system is affected. If you go on removing parts, the frog will struggle to make the necessary adjustments to survive the trauma, often for an extraordinarily long period of time, but eventually the whole system will collapse. Once the frog has died, no amount of surgery, remedial attention or teams of management consultants will revive it.

Whilst the OD perspective of organisations is that they are more like the frog – more like a living system – most large organisations do have a mixture of bike parts and frog parts. In other words, there are bike-like parts that can be hived off without creating any sustainable damage and there are frog parts, like finance for instance, that are core to the system. If we take the metaphor further, the finance, or corporate services, function in a Local Government organisation resides in the head of the frog. Remove it and the frog might jump around for a while, but the frog cannot live for long without its head...OR its heart.

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Current trends in management

In the past, the emphasis has been on the mechanistic or bicycle style of management – or management by MBA.

The MBA culture is now seen to have created a generation of professionals who learned to be managers instead of leaders. They brought MBA training to organisational life, such as principles of bargaining, emotional control, human relations skills and the technology of quantitative control.

If we continue with this process modelling, we risk repeating past mistakes and recreating the same problems. Organisation development allows and encourages independent thinking, innovation and genuine leadership in a more organic, future-oriented and sustainable context.

Bringing back the balance

Local Government doesn't have to look far to find examples of where the bicycle approach has

Improving management and leadership skills for administration managers

TAFE New South Wales – Riverina Institute

The overall efficiency of an organisation can be dramatically increased by improving relationships within the workplace.

This principle led Joanne Stavely (Manager of Staff Training & Development) and Graeme Stuchbery (Director of Delivery) of TAFE New South Wales – Riverina Institute, to commission a series of workshops for administration managers in the Functional Support and Delivery areas.

Joanne produced a list of goals for the staff and Margaret Devlin of CfOD developed a

program of workshops to achieve these goals. The program was designed to develop the people management, relationship and team-building skills of Support and Delivery staff and to encourage a more collaborative working relationship between the two groups.

In the workshops at Riverina Institute, managers were asked to honestly analyse their own workplace relationships. "When managers begin modelling the attitudes and behaviours they expect from their staff, the organisation culture improves enormously.

Systems Thinking at Work

affected organisational success, for instance, amalgamation and CCT. Productivity and competition became the game and a classic example is the dissecting of an organisation into disparate parts, often in competition with each other. Whilst there were some gains, there were also some spectacular losses.

Writers and psychologists like Peter O'Connor, who writes for *The Age*, have coined the phrase, 'Workplace Woes'. This refers to the common experience in the workplace of powerlessness and exhaustion from the demands of work. Work is given priority over relationships. As work becomes more specialised and outsourced, more focused on the speed of technology rather than the pace of people, we feel further alienated from each other and lack the sense of belonging to something whole and meaningful. The bar seems to be rising constantly. And are we doing it better?

The Future

If organisation development is the connectedness between everything and everything else in an organisation, then the solution is easy. What drives most of us at work is not the work ethic, but the need to add value, to achieve, to make a difference and to belong to something greater than ourselves.

Effective leadership and management are aligned with the natural flows and processes of the organisation and facilitate their progress. You have probably been as frustrated as everyone else by mechanistic, fad-style management theories that are more likely to distort and confuse work practices than fix them.

If you do engage in an OD approach to organisational life, then your challenge is to lead as well as manage. You must ask more *why* questions rather than *what* or *how* questions. Become a learner and a doer rather than a knower.

A lot of the work we do at the Centre for Organisation Development is with local government. It is interesting then that it has taken me so long to put my finger on what it is about local government organisations that makes them different from so many other organisations.

I think it is that they are - in marketing terms - early adopters. Marketers would explain this as 'adopter category theory' but

it simply means that they are not amongst the first 2.5 per cent of the population to adopt innovation - they are the innovators - but they fit into the second category, which is made up of the next 13.5 per cent of the community.

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Early adopters are big processors of information and sharers of new information. They are prepared to take calculated risks but are concerned with failure.

This profile fits local government ideally. Innovative without being foolhardy, but a very long way ahead of most organisations of a similar size in terms of learning and applying new ideas that are practical and applicable now, and future focused. Strategic planning and community development is Council's core business and staff are encouraged to innovate and create solutions to often complex, multi-disciplinary issues.

Our private sector clients are often amazed to learn that councils have been implementing leading edge and innovative programs long before it becomes 'fashionable'.

A current example of this is local government's engagement in values-based leadership. As we introduce this and other organisation development and people focused management concepts to our private sector clients, they are regularly surprised that the best examples of excellence and innovation in this area are from local government.

It is a reminder that Councils often take for granted the fact that so much of what they do is transferable and valuable in the private sector.

The complete presentation and a schedule of references can be found at www.cfod.com.au

The people skills always make the real difference', said Margaret.

Joanne reported that 'staff members found Margaret to be an excellent facilitator. She built a high level of trust between participants and created an environment in which they could share their concerns and frustrations about the organisation, the way they work with others and the way that others work with them'.

'Three workshops over 18 months provided participants with a range of management and leadership skills that gave them a better insight into themselves and the way they relate to other people', Joanne said.

The success of these workshops has encouraged Joanne to consider similar workshops that would benefit other managers within the Riverina Institute.



OD NETWORK CONFERENCE, VANCOUVER

by Margaret Devlin Managing Director Centre for Organisation Development

Recently I was the only Australian at the international OD Network Conference in Vancouver with 650 other delegates from the USA, Canada, Ireland, Israel, Mexico, Belgium, Germany, the UK and Palestine. We had all come together to learn, network and share new information and techniques in organisation development and reaffirm those that are tried and true.

I realised very quickly at the conference that, in spite of Australia's geographic isolation and the relatively recent acceptance of organisation development as a practice in this country, organisation development as I know it at CfOD is up-to-date, if not ahead, of work in other countries.

For me the highlight of the conference was the size and scope of issues and activities available. There was a choice of up to 12 workshops every day for 5 days and those I attended were worthwhile and stimulating. We brainstormed ideas, challenged preconceived approaches, shared experiences,

discussed case studies and looked at future directions in OD with some of the most recognised thinkers and writers in the business.

The topics and ideas discussed at the conference will be included in forthcoming issues of ODSPOT and as sessions at OD Group meetings.

The focus of this conference was on the world community and the view that work needs to be more balanced. The theme was 'Traditions, Transitions, Transformations in a Global Community'. The involvement of Canada's First Nations people and their generosity of spirit was a wonderful insight into the links between traditional culture and modern organisational life. Such insights included the ability for people to forgive the sins of the past and move on. The practice of holding onto painful experiences can be corrosive and people need to let that go, embrace change and move on without losing the cultural centre of their heritage. I saw this as a very good example of how change doesn't have to mean loss; change can be a gain.

Naturally the events of September 11 and their implications for organisational life were discussed at length. In the end, as it has always been, the future for organisation development is still all about sustainable relationships. It's the people who matter most.

The conference is an annual event and CfOD will have a bigger representation in Montreal in November this year. An opportunity to exchange experiences and ideas in organisation development at an international professional level is not to be missed.



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OD Moves & News

OD is about people and we plan to make a regular feature on the back page for news about people in OD, career changes, moves and new opportunities. This is your networking spot; so if you have any news to share with your peers, please let us know.

WATCH THIS SPACE