

# **A self-help approach to realising corporate strategy**

**Mee-Yan Cheung-Judge**

**Because it involves internal stakeholders, Organisational Development differs from a traditional consultancy process. It not only develops the capacity for enhanced performance, it also encourages learning.**

Organisational Development (OD) is a democratic, truly collaborative process which can help organisations resolve diverse issues such as implementing cultural change, restructuring, determining the mission and values, introducing new systems or processes and/or enhancing leadership and employee morale.

In practice OD is very different to a traditional consultancy approach, where a team of consultants analyse a given problem, collect data, present their findings to the Board, agree a solution and then project manage the implementation of change. Here the emphasis is usually on a top-down approach, with the consultants present and active in all stages of the transformational change process.

In contrast an Organisational Development intervention involves seconding together individuals, who are stakeholders in the given issue, into an internal think-tank or change group; then allowing them to map out the scope of the project, collect data, think through a solution and coordinate its implementation. Here the emphasis is on self-help, learning and building the internal capability of the organisation.

The primary focus of OD is on the relationships and processes between and among individuals and groups in organisations. As such, it can be more cost effective than traditional consultancy - it involves far fewer billable days - and its effects can be longer-lasting. When individuals are involved in the change process, they not only take far greater ownership of it, they also become 'guardian angels' who safeguard the new way of doing things in the future.

## **Coordinating role**

An Organisational Development consultant can help to set up the OD process, train the think-tank members in the diagnostic techniques, and the methodology, and coordinate activity in the initial stages. As the project moves towards implementation, this coordinating role diminishes and the OD practitioner becomes more of a trouble-shooter/counsellor, someone who provides only occasional support as needed by the group.

The OD coordinating role doesn't have to be undertaken by an external consultant. Many multinational organisations have their own internal OD teams who support the business leaders and manage interventions that help these companies to deliver their strategic vision.

Senior managers can help to set the scene for Organisational Development. Having formulated the corporate strategy, they should ask questions such as what type of organisation do we have to be in order to deliver these goals, what type of structure or group composition will enhance decision making, what systems and processes will help us bring out the best in people? Questions such as these can then be examined through Organisational Development.

## **Behaviour and values**

Sometimes, choosing the right individual as the OD coordinator can be a challenge. Ideally senior managers themselves should be encouraged to act as OD practitioners, because they are primarily responsible for major change initiatives. They have the power to transform organisations and they can be trained to utilise valid research data and OD approaches, to add value and save money.

Regardless of whether they are internal or external, an effective OD practitioner will usually have the following competencies and attributes:

- A firm commitment to the organisational self-help approach and the ability to act as a change agent.
- Strong interpersonal skills, humanistic values and the desire to balance individual and organisational needs (and not sacrifice one for the other).
- An understanding of human processes such as trust, dependency and ethics.
- A belief that change should be synonymous with development.
- A true appreciation of the value of data and enquiry.
- A high degree of self-knowledge and a recognition of the importance of feelings/emotions.
- An aptitude for encouraging experimentation and resolving conflict.
- An awareness of the value of giving people the freedom to choose rather than coercing them by exercising authority.

Organisational Development works because the philosophy is right. Dealing with performance and people issues is never easy but when you involve a representative internal group of credible individuals, who are using the right tools, sharing expertise and making interventions based on valid research, you can truly enhance organisational effectiveness. An added benefit is that the process provides enormous learning for those involved and they also develop a far greater capacity to solve business problems.

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*She will be presenting a one-day Masterclass on Organisational Development - for senior managers, senior HR practitioners, OD specialists, internal change agents and consultants - at Roffey Park, on 25 April. Developed from her research, observations and experience, the Masterclass will highlight the roles and competencies required in OD and how the process can be made more effective. For more details, please contact Pauline Hinds on 01293 851644 or e-mail [pauline.hinds@roffeypark.com](mailto:pauline.hinds@roffeypark.com)*