

# Session 1 – Introduction to Organizational Development

## OVERVIEW

Organization development is an ongoing, systematic process of implementing effective organizational change. OD is known as both a field of science focused on understanding and managing organizational change and as a field of scientific study and inquiry. It is interdisciplinary in nature and draws on sociology, psychology, particularly industrial and organizational psychology, and theories of motivation, learning, and personality. Although behavioral science has provided the basic foundation for the study and practice of OD, new and emerging fields of study have made their presence felt. Experts in systems thinking and organizational learning, structure of intuition in decision making, and coaching (to name a few) whose perspective is not steeped in just the behavioral sciences, but a much more multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary approach, have emerged as OD catalysts or tools.

Organizational Development is the act, process or result of furthering, advancing, or promoting the growth of an organization

## DEFINITION OF ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT BY EDGAR SCHEIN

An organization is the planned coordination of the activities of a number of people for the achievement of some common explicit purpose or goals through the division of labored function, and through a hierarchy of authority and responsibility.

**Development** is the act, process, result or state of being developed-which in turn means to advance, to promote the growth of, to evolve the possibility of, to further, to improve or to enhance something.

Two elements stand out:

- (a) Development may be an act, process or an end state
- (b) Development means bettering something

## ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT APPROACH TO CHANGE

The Organizational Development Approach to Change treats the organization as a system.

A system is an orderly group of logically related parts, principles and beliefs. Alternatively, it is a grouping or arrangement that relate or interact with each other in such a way as to form a whole.

**Thus this approach has the following characteristics:**

- (a) Total view not a limited view
- (b) Relationship between the organization and the environment and the internal dynamics of the organization
- (c) Teams-temporary, semi-permanent and permanent- continuous improvement
- (d) Inter-personal Communication
- (e) Individuals- self-awareness and self-acceptance-developing skills, knowledge and ability of individuals

## **THE CHARACTERISTICS OF ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The characteristics of Organizational Development are:

1. It is a planned strategy to bring about organizational change
  - a. Organizational change /Change management is an approach to transitioning individuals, teams, and organizations to a desired future state.
2. Organizational Development always involves a collaborative approach to change
  - a. Collaborative approach to change means involving the people affected, creating the change with them rather than doing the change to them. This works by creating pull and gaining commitment through getting people to invest in the change. A big dilemma with collaboration is the extent to which you allow people to make decisions vs. make recommendations about the change. Risks with giving away too much power include people making sub-optimal, self-oriented choices or the devolved decisions across the organization do not align with one another and hence create more problems than they solve. The problem with collaboration is that it takes time and effort, which relatively few organizations are either willing or able to give. When speed is important and resources are thin on the ground, then investing in collaborative efforts can seem wasteful.
  - b. Consultative - A compromise to the full-on collaborative approach is to show that at least you are listening to the people affected by the change. This may take the form of interactive real-time 'town hall' meetings, directors' tours, and so on. It can use technology for web-enabled discussions and so on. It may also use suggestion schemes and the Request for Comment (RFC) approach, where plans out to people for comment, although what you do with comments received is entirely up to you. Care must be taken during consultation to ensure that people know the process, and that they perceive it to be fair. As you move away from collaboration, greater trust is required of the decision-makers and thus more trust-building activities may be required. Consultative approaches provide a degree of balance between the engagement of collaboration and the push of direction and coercion.
  - c. Directive - In a directive approach, there may still be a high level of communication, but it is now largely one-way. The organization is told how it will change. This is thus using the principle of push to drive through change. With the control of what happens in relatively few hands, the risk of variation in the plan is essentially removed. What will happen and when is laid out in a schedule that may or may not be publicized. The problem with this is that there is often a fear (which may or may not be well-founded) that there will be greater resistance to change if people know what is going to happen. Resistance comes particularly from those who hold power (and it is surprising what power even the most junior person can have). To help reduce the problem of resistance, very high levels of

communication may be required and a paternal-maternal approach may be used ('father knows best' + 'mother cares'). Thus, for example, there may be generous severance packages for those who lose their jobs.

- d. Coercive - At the furthest extreme, a coercive approach pays little attention to the people, their ideas or their needs. Changes are implemented in a relatively mechanical way. Typical of a coercive approach is the shock and surprise that people encounter as change is thrust upon them. A not unusual situation is that people arrive at work one Monday morning and find that they no longer have a job. They may alternatively be told that they are going to have to move far away across the country, a tactic sometimes used to legally reduce the workforce. Another variant is to bankrupt the company and then re-start as a new company with everyone having to apply again for their jobs (this has been used to get around Trade Union issues). Not all coercive approaches are unethical and some are simply born of the need for urgency. Ethics lie in the values of the people who are planning and implementing the change, rather than the fact that a coercive approach is being used.
3. Organizational Development programs include an emphasis on ways to improve & enhance performance.
4. Organizational Development relies on a set of humanistic values about people & organization.
5. Organizational Development represents a system approach