



The Howells Group, Inc.

Bringing Business to Life

## How do I get the most out of an Organizational Development Specialist? – A primer for business leaders.

Organization Development is a dynamic values-based approach to systems change in organizations and communities; it strives to build the capacity to achieve and sustain a new desired state that benefits the organization or community and the world around them.

- The Organization Development Network

Ask senior members of any organization if their team, group, division or company could work better and they are likely to say "yes." They may even be able to point to specific areas that need improvement. But how should those improvements be made? Addressing that question is the role of an Organizational Development professional. Other, more specific questions OD experts can help leaders answer include:

How effective is your organization at:

- Clarifying roles?
- Identifying, growing & capitalizing on talent?
- Aligning leaders and their teams with key initiatives?
- Planning and decision-making?
- Effectively and honestly examining itself in relation to the community, competitors and the larger marketplace
- Anticipating & creating a desired future?
- Identifying and practicing organizational core values?

To give an example, if your organization has internal teamwork issues, you could address the problem by taking any number of approaches. A seasoned and experienced OD specialist can expand your options. However, OD's strategic role is not to seek an immediate solution but to explore the roots of the problem. Approaching an issue this way is the difference between putting on a band-aid and having surgery.

The metaphor is fitting, because the decision to use an OD Specialist should be considered as heavily as going through major surgery. To use a clinical definition:

*"OD is a long range effort to improve organization's problem solving and renewal processes, particularly through more effective and collaborative management of organization culture-with specific emphasis on the culture of formal workteams-with the assistance of a change agent or catalyst and the use of the theory and technology of applied behavioral science including action research"*

- Warren Bennis

### Important Figures in Organizational Development

#### **Kurt Lewin**

The person many consider to be "The Father of Social Psychology." The German-born psychologist pioneered thinking group dynamics and organizational development from the early 1900s until his death in 1947.

#### **Warren Bennis**

An Organizational Consultant and Professor at the University of Southern California specializing in group behavior and leadership studies. His research at MIT in the 1960s contributed a move toward less hierarchical, more democratic institutions.

#### **Richard Beckhard**

The Founder of the Organization Development Network in 1967 and author of many seminal books in the field.

#### **Jane Moulton**

Moulton co-developed the Managerial Grid Model to conceptualize management style based on priorities in relationships and leadership.



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OD has existed as a concept since the 1950s, and over time has continued to be acknowledged as an effective method for organizational restructuring and evolution. The profession is now an accredited program at many universities.

OD focuses on the organization as a network of people and as an entity with its own identity and personality. Uncovering issues causing problems in the organization, then, involves examining its core beliefs, values and attitudes. The dichotomy of an organization is that it is affected by both individual and collective identities at the same time, making it twice as complex.

Taking a hard look inside oneself is challenging work, but it is work that should be celebrated. You can expect an OD Specialist to be open, sensitive, patient and respectful at all times during the process. Every member of your organization is challenged and encouraged to (It is important that every member of your organization) practice that same openness, sensitivity, patience and respect at all times during the process.

Your Howells Group OD Specialist will help you look at the beliefs, attitudes and values of members at all levels of your organization. However, though the goal of OD is to enhance the environment and productivity of an organization, an OD Specialist will rarely do so in an active role by giving mandates for change. The role of The Howells Group is to facilitate the process of bringing about your own change through insightful questions and exercises.

Effective OD Specialists should be experienced (sophisticated) "hybrids" who combine aspects of behavioral sciences, intuition and mature insight. They are capable of uncovering critical issues in an organization that are blocking progress and need to be addressed for long term, sustainable success. But more often than not, those issues are not solved by physical changes in the organization, but by psychological changes. Howells Group experts are trained to see the organizational relationships that make up the whole organization and trace issues to their roots, which are often spread in multiple parts of the organization. Many of the areas affected by an issue would not be immediately apparent by looking at linear hierarchies of operation. Seeing an organization through interconnections rather than strict structures is called Systems Thinking. It is central to OD and to The Howells Group's practitioners.

For more information on Organizational Development, please see our website at [www.thehowellsgroup.com](http://www.thehowellsgroup.com). We are also happy to recommend additional reading.

