

## **ODA Conference – Open Space on “Contemporary OD” Discussion Outputs**

**Discussion Members** (Jo, Wendy, Max, Mary-Anne, Amanda, Daryl)

**Convener:** Max Edwards

The discussion was informed by a balance of three client and three external consultant perspectives.

We began with brief introductions and areas of interest in the field of organisation development, including: team effectiveness / team development, organisational change, career transition / outplacement, learning and development, group facilitation, one-one / coaching, design of communities of practice, measurement and evaluation, change management, on-line learning, safety training / corporate compliance, mentoring, and talent retention.

### **OD Distinctions**

Next we attempted to create a common definition of OD and what might distinguish it from the general practice of human resources.

Threads and themes included:

- Focus on the people dimension of organisations, with a social systems perspective – concerned with whole-system change
- Understand and work with group dynamics
- Seek to influence organisation-wide for organisation/business improvement
- Understand how people feel in relation to themselves, career and organisation
- Take a strategic medium-long range view
- Often seen as more approachable, relationship-oriented and better listeners by clients than HR peers (who are often perceived to be more process-driven)
- OD tends to have a mandate for innovation and change, rather than maintenance of people policies and systems (consequently don't have to play the role of “bad cop”)
- Is OD a subset of change management or vice-versa? (Google Change Management Institute's definition)
- Support organisations to re-energise / renewal – provide a health check for the workforce
- Hold up a mirror to clients on system dynamics as a key factor impacting organisational productivity and outcomes
- Tend to hold a philosophical or researched point of view, as the basis for rigorous frameworks or approaches that inform our work (reflection is a key part our practice).

### **Value of OD to Clients – using external providers**

Whilst we initially set out to explore contemporary approaches to OD, the group was more curious about the client-consultant relationship in delivering contemporary OD. We were also interested to understand what matters most from a client perspective. Return on investment was the key theme, and we loosely linked this to Robert Brinkerhoff's research (table below). Jo briefly introduced us to the government / Social Ventures Australia's “Program Logic and Performance Assessment (PLPA) Framework”.

<b>What matters most to clients</b>	<b>Approximate Relative Importance</b>	<b>Implications for OD practitioners and consultants</b>
Preparedness of audience, learner, stakeholders	40 %	Ability to assist clients in positioning and communicating the work as purposeful, establishing organisational ownership, engagement, commitment and choice
Trust in the consultant	30%	Focus on building authentic relationships, gaining rapport, managing expectations, working in partnership, sharing in successes and failures
Outside factors	15%	Need to discover and understand the likely impact of outside factors to inform solution design.
Tools and methods	15%	Provide entry-level qualification of expertise and experience, not necessarily the strongest differentiator

We then asked the clients in the discussion to share with us their experience of the good, the bad and the ugly of receiving external OD provider services:

<b>What clients valued – the good stuff</b>	<b>The bad and the ugly</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided a multi-pronged approach to build sustainable impact</li> <li>• Worked in partnership to ensure multiple linkages to stakeholders across the organisation</li> <li>• Did their homework on the organisation</li> <li>• Built relationship based on trust – support us to be successful, enable us to have the faith they will deliver</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Came across as superficial</li> <li>• Didn't listen to the initial brief – wasted time repeating this, then demanded detailed requests for information</li> <li>• Used generic (un-personalised) marketing campaign</li> </ul>

We started with an interest in the practice of contemporary OD. What emerged was a desire to collaborate in partnership to explore the partnership of OD practice amongst those internal and external to the organisation. We quickly got down to business on a vital success factor for good OD practice.

### **Next Steps**

- Propose to continue discussion in a subsequent ODA forum – maybe apply a fishbowl of consultant and client experiences as the basis for a deeper dialogue.
- Max to compile a note of discussion outputs and distribute via ODA.