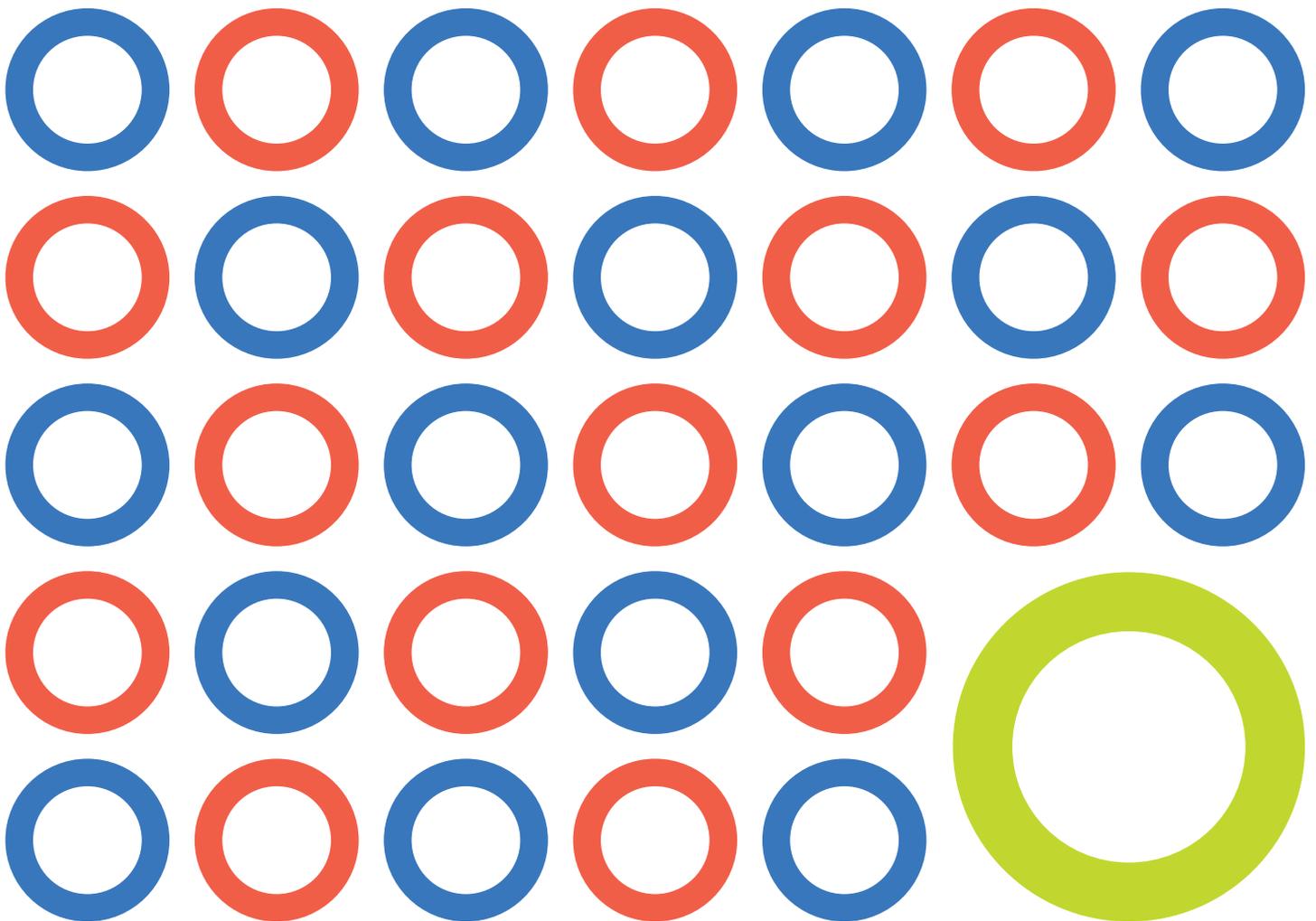


Organisational Development: The Oasis Approach: A Human Relations Perspective for the 21st Century



oasis

School of Human Relations

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Readers' Note

Section 1 of this manual outlines the key characteristics of organisational development and consultancy as understood by most practitioners and providers.

Section 2 highlights the distinctive way in which the Oasis School of Human Relations applies and implements its own OD approach.

Section 3 gives a clear and detailed model of the consultancy process when it is implemented.

Oasis prefers, where possible, to be involved in a peer-based approach to Organisational Development. Such an approach is outlined in **Section 4**.

Acknowledgement

Much of this manual is written under the influence of Mario van Boeschoten who has been guide, coach and mentor to our work in and with organisations. We hope he approves of the way we have understood so much of what he has helped us learn. However there is still much learning with him ahead. To Mario many thanks.

We also thank the many organisations and change agents who have afforded us the opportunity to work and learn with them over the last 20 years.

Section 1: Organisational Development

The established view of Organisational Development is:

The system-wide application of behavioural science knowledge to the planned development and reinforcement of organisational strategies, structures, and processes for improving an organisation's effectiveness.

Cummings and Worley, *Organization Development & Change*, 5th edition

Such a definition points to a number of essential elements.

Essential Elements of Organisational Development

1. Six key characteristics
2. Developing Organisational Effectiveness
3. Working with a Consultant
4. Questions of an OD process

Any organisation offering consultancy and consultants brings to these elements their own perspective on organisational development and how these formulate their guiding principles of practice. This extends into a consultant's way of understanding organisational life, how they translate this into action and what they focus upon as the key aspects within any development process.

1. Six key characteristics

Organisational Development has six key characteristics:

- a) Organisational Development applies to the whole system**, including the overall well-being of the individuals involved. This is in contrast to approaches, which focus upon one or a number of aspects of a system e.g. management information, systems development or employee counselling.
- b) Organisational Development draws upon applied social science** and areas of interest relevant to organisational behaviour such as leadership, group dynamics and work design. It also draws upon approaches, which consider areas of specific objectives, the perceived stage of development, the strategic development, environmental relations and such like. An Organisational Development approach includes the personal and social needs of the 'participants' in the organisation.
- c) Organisational Development is concerned with planned, unplanned and responsive change** – change that is planned with the 'actors' in mind and the capabilities of the system in which they are working. It usually includes:
 - A shared diagnostic outline, followed by...
 - A series of planned interventions and/or processes that are usually negotiated with many of those within the organisation before...
 - Implementation is agreed and progressed.

Consensus building and gaining the participation of those involved are characteristic of most Organisational Development approaches. Openness to revision and modifying plans in the light of the response gained and mechanisms for continuous review are further characteristics of this approach.

- d) Organisational Development involves both the creation and the subsequent reinforcement of change.** It focuses upon the longer-term trends of the change process and develops a relationship that usually extends over time.

This enables the results to be embedded in the organisation and the ramifications of any change to be incorporated within the overall organisation's direction. It is worth bearing in mind that 'change' can include growth, regression, reduction and alteration.

- e) **Organisational Development encompasses strategy, values, resources, structure, and the process of change**, although different Organisational Development programmes will focus upon one kind of change more than another. A programme designed to align the organisation with new developments in its environment, for example, might go on to examine the effects upon the organisation of work groups and the contributions of particular roles to the new response.
- f) **Organisational Development emphasises the development of the organisation's people and the quality of their relationships**. It is grounded in a human relations approach that perceives structures or practices that limit opportunities for human development as ultimately harmful to the longer term effectiveness and health of the organisation.

2. Developing Organisational Effectiveness

Organisational Development is aimed at improving organisational effectiveness. This is perhaps the most widely acknowledged aspect of OD. This relies upon two assumptions:

- An effective organisation is **able to better solve its own problems in the future**. Organisational Development promotes the ability of the organisation to rely increasingly upon its own efforts and resources while retaining the ability to invite skilled help when necessary. It runs counter to relying exclusively upon its own capabilities or on 'experts' brought in from outside to do wonders and then depart.
- An effective organisation has both a **high quality of working and personal life for those involved, and morally acceptable high productivity**. It seeks individuals who are highly motivated and encourages them to contribute continuously to the wider organisation's life.

3. Working with a Consultant in an Organisational Development Process

These are some thoughts we and our clients have found useful in learning how to work together to make the most effective use of the time and effort of an organisational development process and the use of consultants.

- **Organisational Development isn't easy**. The people in the situation often think they know what the difficulty is but not what will help. They will often seek 'answers' that alleviate symptoms because they are not sure of the deeper issues.
- **A Human Relations approach** to Organisational Development is based on combining an **understanding of the dynamics of organisational phases, structures etc, the people involved, the work they do and the wider context and relationships they live within**.
- It is **collaborative and participative**, and based upon a working partnership where each party brings something unique to the whole. The consultants have knowledge of organisations and how they work. The organisation/client has knowledge of their circumstances. They must work out a mutual regard and respect if they are to become effective.
- For the collaboration to work it has to be entered into as a **two-way process** that takes place over time.

4. Core Questions within an Organisational Development Process

What is involved?

The point of departure is usually some form of recognition by key people in the organisation of a 'crisis', or 'feelings of being stuck' and needing help, or just a wish to do things better. There is often an acknowledgement that the usual responses (training and so on) are no longer adequate to make the kind of impact required.

What kind of commitment is required?

There must be a commitment to do the work involved as it is identified and evolves. The work has to be planned together. The client gives the brief: the consultants create the development process. All stages are agreed and points where the process can be set aside or completed are clearly marked out in advance. The client is not committing himself or herself to some open-ended process. But they do recognise that development takes time and may not be entirely predictable. It is the *quality* of the relationships which will determine how far the process will succeed.

Over what kind of time period?

This can vary but is determined by the nature of the issues being addressed and is laid out in a contract of boundaries between the organisation and the consultant. There needs to be room for reviewing the work, extending it if necessary, bringing it to a close if required, or creating a way to sustain the momentum that has begun to take shape.

What are the likely benefits to arise?

A rise in the level of consciousness and a move from either/or polarities to somewhere in between, i.e. asking the question: 'What is the true third option?' This freeing up of the understanding and thinking of those involved forms the basis for re-working the issues, with a view to a clearer sense of a shared future stage that makes sense of the people, the situation and the phase of the organisation's development.

What can be expected in the way of support?

The consultant is not to be confused with a traditional white-coated expert bringing in things from the outside. He or she is someone who is recognised as an available resource.

The consultant serves the organisation and therefore depends upon the trust others put in him or her and the confidence that those in the organisation have about the independence of mind and clarity of understanding that the consultant brings. It is one thing to challenge the consultant as strongly as is felt necessary, it is another to pre-judge or disregard the views they hold. It is expensive to hire somebody that you do not respect.

How can it be afforded in time and cost?

Thinking time is often the last on the list of priorities for people busy in organisational life. *It is often feared because of what may arise from it.*

The biggest task in the early days of an assignment is convincing busy people that thinking is actually a valuable activity and that only by better thinking will the situation they are in improve. The hardest work is often persuading people that there are no short cuts to substantial change but that substantial change lasts – even in turbulent times.

Outcomes

Our experience has been that issues of 'quality' emerge – issues to do with better functioning – which in turn affect efficiency, effectiveness, satisfaction and continuing organisational health.

Section 2: Organisational Development with Oasis

When an organisation partners with the Oasis School of Human Relations we bring an *organisational development* approach that is based on an understanding and practice of a number of key principles, each reflecting aspects of our values:

- **Peer learning:**¹ adults coming together freely.
- **Participation:** those taking part are involved, to a greater or lesser degree, in determining the structure, the form and the content of what is developed.
- **Collaboration:** those involved share in decision making over the range of issues that make up the process and related activities – both the ‘when’ and the ‘what’ of the intervention. This reflects a view that those involved are in relationship with one another. They thus affect each other and the outcomes of any work.
- **Experientially-based** (wherever possible): those involved in any initiative are actively engaged in determining the learning to be gained from the experiences generated: experiences that are designed to enable particular issues or questions to be explored. Content and delivery are integrated into a consistent and authentic balance.
- **Theory and application** are vital elements in validating any organisational development and in ensuring that any learning gained has a relevance to the working world.
- **Partnering review processes** are developed and practised as a principle means of learning in practice.
- **The commissioning organisation** and its key players stand at the heart of the learning. To this end we help establish organisational learning mechanisms to enable the learning to assist in raising organisational consciousness and effectiveness.
- **A developmental view of organisations, groups and individuals:** this vital aspect of developmental learning enables the consultant/facilitator to moderate their contribution in the light of where people are, what needs they are able to express, and where they wish their learning to take them.

When you apply all those elements together you have *dialogue*. Or, at least, you depend upon dialogue for working out the many implications that arise from such elements. In practice all this means we want people to ask questions about:

- what they are doing
- how they are doing it

as well as:

- why they are doing it.

Each person or organisation is encouraged to recognise that practice is constrained by a number of influences and that each of us must assess and acknowledge, negotiate and accommodate these influences in a way that informs the way we may practise. These influences may take the form of particular contractual obligations within a specific setting. They may represent a series of understandings that must be acquired before undertaking work with a particular client group, or dealing with certain issues. Managing these areas effectively amounts to a recognition and understanding of the boundaries, parameters and organisational priorities we work within, whilst still shaping future development.

¹ See Section 4, Developing a Peer-Based Approach to Staff and Organisational Development, for further details.

Why partner with Oasis?

- Our approach in all that we do is **developmental**.
- We work out of a distinctively **human relations and whole person perspective**. Our form of practice has evolved to a stage where we now offer a highly effective and challenging approach to those sectors engaged in any form of people or organisational development.
- We engage in **real partnership** with people and organisations. We design and implement ways of working in response to their individual developmental needs, their unique organisational culture and their core questions.
- **We listen at a deep level** to assist in gaining the highest degree of organisational understanding. In short, we ‘get under the skin’ of our client organisations in order that we fully grasp and appreciate their unique organisational phase, questions and characteristics.
- Our **experience crosses a wide spectrum** of sectors, geographical regions and diversity.
- Our practitioners are **seasoned human relations consultants** with live experience that enables them not only to understand but also to empathise and offer pragmatic approaches to change, development and reinvention – be it organisational or individual.
- We are **different from other consultancies**. Our approach highlights this and those with whom we work affirm it.
- You can take advantage of over **20 years of working with both people and organisations** through a human relations approach: our approach has grown over time through working at depth with individuals, groups and organisations.

‘What lies behind us and what lies ahead of us is insignificant compared to what lies within us.’

Oliver Wendell Holmes

Section 3: An Oasis Model of Consultancy

Oasis uses an eight-stage framework² that when involving an external OD consultant assists organisations to gain the best possible response in achieving their organisational objectives. The model is applied in a cyclical and dynamic way. In practice this means that some stages can be re-visited a number of times when necessary.



Figure 1: Stages of Consultancy

Each stage is illustrated by outlining its purpose in the process and the elements which both consultant and organisation need to give particular attention to.

The skills sections refer to the abilities which need to be clearly demonstrated by the consultant. In some settings these same skills may need to be acquired by key organisational players, depending on the extent to which the organisation wishes to increase its own change agent capacity.

Many of the skills outlined may already be strongly developed by individuals within organisations; this is often true of those detailed in the Changing stage. Other skills, such as those appropriate to Contracting and Challenging, tend to be less well developed and consciously applied in many organisations.

1. Considering: Awareness of Need/Pre-entry

Purpose	Elements	Skills
Acknowledging the situation Consider what is being asked Review the values sought in a provider	Self assessment Who has authority to decide Invitation/s	Self awareness

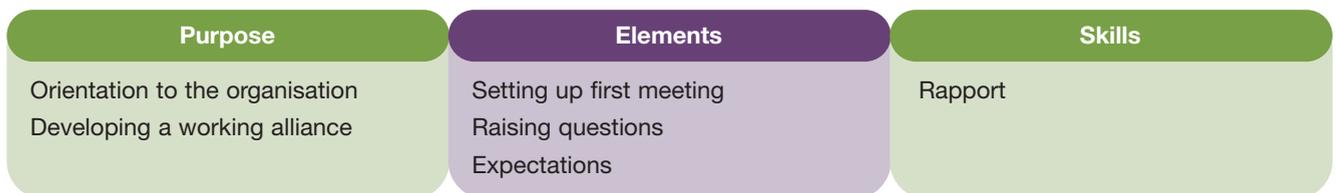
² Developed from the Oasis Seven Stage Model of Effective Relationships – see Oasis Elements: The Seven Stage Model, Oasis Press, 2011, or Bryce Taylor, Forging the Future Together – Human Relations in the 21st Century, Oasis Press, 2003 for more on the model.

Before contacting a potential provider, consider what questions you are responding to by involving a consultant. Also consider if there are clear parameters to work within or whether the parameters may be shifted if it means achieving a more successful outcome.

- For what problem have you decided that a consultant or external provider is the answer?
- To what extent do you want a partner to collaborate with you to discover together a response to your key questions?
- What level of consultant are you seeking? Is it to:
 - Develop skills in others that you already have?
 - Discover what competencies are required in an unknown future?
 - Help you work out how to do things better or to assist in developing ways to do better things?
- What level of resource are you able to commit?
- What are the parameters that need to be taken into account? These could include time scales, legislation, external demands, internal capacity, and so on.

If you are not sure what is needed, or need support to consider the above, involve a consultant to help you in the ‘consideration’ phase to set the brief.

2. Contacting: Context/Orientation to Client/Entry

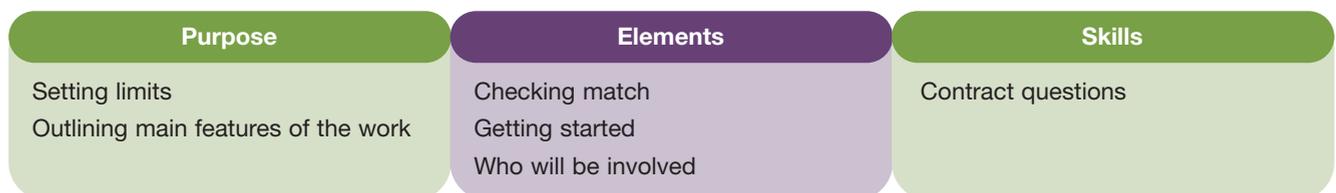


There is a contact stage. The commissioning group or person holds an initial meeting. It is at this stage that consultants would identify organisational expectations and discover the key questions being asked for which external assistance has been determined as the most appropriate response.

In this phase, thoughts are given as to whether Oasis and the organisation undertaking the development process have sufficient connection and shared understanding to work together effectively.

Although there is often time spent in dialogue for orientation to each other’s working approaches, this phase may be relatively short depending on the level of intervention required.

3. Contracting: Entry



If both organisations consider a further step appropriate, in the next phase working boundaries are agreed, the initial contract is established and any conditions are outlined.

It can be tempting to gloss over this stage; however it is important to recognise its crucial contribution to the whole intervention. It is the time when the commitment for any partnership is tested. This may be highlighted through time or resources required by either organisation.

For instance, a larger scale contract requires both to consider their commitment to such a venture, which may be over months if not years. Organisations often realise that whilst they have a training budget they have not created an organisational development budget – both in terms of money and time.

It is the discussions at this stage that give rise to the outcomes or learning objectives for the work and, as such, provide evaluation criteria by which any initiative may be assessed and reviewed.

The question is more related to, ‘Do we trust one another enough to take a further step?’ If the answer for both organisations is ‘yes’, it is here the work really begins. The effectiveness of any development rests on real commitment being made at this point. The commitment in any development process will be tested and if the relationship is not developed the process may falter.

4. Clarifying: Diagnostic Analysis

Purpose	Elements	Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying the issues Examining the need for change Testing out readiness for change Finding meaning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purpose Relationships Rewards Structures Processes Leadership Direction Politics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listening Reflecting Summarising Data collection Open questions Creating manageable chunks

Outlining and exploring the range of concerns, analysing and examining the past, present and future is the focus at this stage. It is about understanding the deeper questions as the context is more deeply understood. It is through this aspect of the process that the issues become more clearly defined and the team or organisational picture unfolds most strongly. Shaping a shared meaning rather than simply a shared vision is essential if greater levels of collaboration and integration are sought.

There is greater transparency of cultural and business-related trends as elements of any intervention begin to be formulated in practice.

5. Challenging: Feedback

Purpose	Elements	Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing new perspectives and opening options Identifying themes Unfolding complexity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessing gap between where we are and where we want to be Exploring internal commitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confrontation Challenge Immediacy Affective competence Working with complexity

In any change process there are defining moments when the confronting of ambiguities and inconsistencies of belief or behaviour is central. For some, this is never more strongly experienced than in the challenge phase. This is a stage where many of the creative tensions and potential conflicts emerge and add to the richness of the process. It is where most organisations face both the value and challenge of diversity, and lay the foundations for creating and shaping the ownership of whatever future path the organisation or team is to tread.

It is a phase where traditional paradigms are uncovered and people can become open to new perspectives and approaches. It is the phase when many begin to realise the potential for the future and in doing so begin to address the consequences of change. It is within this stage that commitment to a development process is often strongly tested.

6. Choosing: Planning

Purpose	Elements	Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examining options Creativity Determining implementation path Creating a climate of choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources Aligning organisational forces in relation to change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Problem solving Option analysis

This marks the shift towards consideration of new responses. If those involved have faced the challenges of the previous stage, they are now faced with a new range of options to consider. It is within this context that priorities for strategic action are assessed. Teams or groups address options that they might take and examine the potential consequences of their decisions. It is a time when some of the most important decisions are based on insufficient knowledge. In this stage there is real benefit from being able to balance the intellectual, affective and behavioural aspects of decision making. This phase draws to an end as decisions are taken for action.

7. Changing: Implementation and Intervention

Purpose	Elements	Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enabling the organisational change agents to take charge Managing the change process Managing consequences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobilising resources Monitoring processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action Planning Rehearsing Implementation Goal setting Revision Review

This stage calls for the initiation and maintenance of strategies for action. For many of those involved, it is the most familiar phase and it often comes as a relief that there is much to be done. Of course, changes have already begun to be made through the earlier stages. Often attitudinal shifts are most obvious, but behavioural changes can also be identified.

However, it is in this stage that action planning and implementation strategies are more clearly identified. Momentum for change has been established and, if previous stages have been effectively addressed, it is in this period that real movement is experienced.

In the changing stage, it is crucial for feedback loops to be established and for learning mechanisms to be in place to monitor the learning and provide a forum for reflection and further clarification, challenges, choices and for other changes to be implemented.

8. Completing or Cycling: Evaluation

Purpose	Elements	Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bringing to a close Say 'farewell' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ending work Ending relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation Re-contracting Managing endings

Whilst the changes may continue, the work of the consultancy intervention may now be drawing to a close. Usually a significant amount of work has been undertaken. This phase offers a process to evaluate the overall initiative, gather learning and bring the phase to a close. Ending the work and closing the relationship is a natural part of any process.

It may be that further projects are contracted for, thus beginning a further cycle of consultancy. At times the cycles may be running inside each other, but no consultancy has eternal life and at the right time not only the work will end, but also the relationship.

A Dynamic Process

Whilst we have outlined an approach to the OD process, it is not intended to represent a simple cycle. It is important to recognise that the stages are iterative and dynamic and any OD process will require movement backwards and forwards between stages and at times the revisiting of previous elements of the process. It does suggest the process is developmental, and as such it is not worthwhile to skip stages in an attempt to speed up OD work as in the longer term this is a hindrance to sustainable change.

Oasis OD Consultancy Overview

Oasis Eight Stages	Purpose	Elements	Skills
Considering: Awareness of need/ Pre-entry	Acknowledging the situation Consider what is being asked Review the values sought in a provider	Self assessment Invitation/s Who has authority to decide	Self awareness
Contacting: Orientation/Entry	Orientation to the organisation Developing working alliance	Setting up first meeting Raising questions Expectations	Rapport
Contracting: Entry	Setting limits Outlining main features of the work	Checking match Getting started Who will be involved	Contract questions
Clarifying: Diagnostic/Analysis	Identifying the issues Examining the need for change Testing out readiness for change Finding meaning	Purpose Relationships Rewards Structures Processes Leadership Direction Politics	Listening Reflecting Summarising Data collection Open questions Creating manageable chunks
Challenging: Feedback	Developing new perspectives and opening options Identifying organisation themes Unfolding complexity	Assessing gap between where we are and where we want to be Exploring internal commitment	Confrontation Challenge Immediacy Affective competence Working with complexity
Choosing: Planning	Examining options Determining implementation path Creating a climate of choice	Resources Aligning organisational forces in relation to change	Problem solving Option analysis
Changing: Implementation Intervention	Enabling the organisational change agents to take charge Managing the change process Managing consequences	Mobilising resources Monitoring processes	Action Planning Rehearsing Implementation Goal setting Revision Review
Completing/Cycling: Evaluation	Bringing the intervention to a close Evaluating work and relationship Say 'farewell'	Ending work Ending relationships	Evaluation Re-contracting Managing endings

Section 4: Developing a Peer-Based Approach to Staff and Organisational Development

Background

Organisations are changing, and the people within them, at a rapid rate. There are many descriptions of these changes and all of them recognise certain themes in common:

- that more will be asked of those in organisations
- that inter-dependence will feature strongly.

This creates enormous challenges to traditional organisations and those within them. ‘Modern’ organisations usually have a degree of familiarity with some of the major themes and the challenges appear less for them. What we term ‘post-modern’ organisations, however, have the opportunity and potential to build into their structures and ethos a recognition of some of the ‘new paradigm’ assumptions that are featuring in working life. In this climate of change, organisations depend upon individuals being more autonomous which, in turn, leads to peer working. A peer-based approach is one that responds strongly to these themes. It is:

- demanding of those attempting it
- challenging and innovative
- reshaping the way people perceive not only the way they relate to others in the workplace but also elsewhere.

Peer working is not for all organisations at all stages of development, or for all staff in any organisation. It can best be thought of as at one end of a continuum that begins with the traditional assumptions about employee/organisation obligations and responsibilities and moves through a series of shifts to those identified below.

	Traditional	Modern	Post-modern
Autonomy	Curtailed	Restricted	Encouraged
Responsibility	Role defined	Encouraged	A ‘given’
Authority	Key figures	Dispersed	Diffused
Initiative	Unknown	Distrusted	Encouraged
Creativity	Banned	Unwelcome	Essential
Support	Training	Training	Development

Approaching the Work

Helping establish an organisation that works out of the peer principle, having over 20 years introducing self and peer assessment methods to individuals, groups and organisations, and supporting other radical initiatives in organisations and companies to move toward peer working, we are convinced that (like much else in life) success depends upon the preparation.

If you don't know where you are, wherever you end up will just be somewhere else, and you won't know much but how come you got there rather than somewhere else.

Diagnosis

Diagnosis is the first step in considering a peer approach. A helpful diagnosis may well lead a group/team/organisation to recognise that it is better to aim for a way station along the path to peer working than go all out for something that would extend just about everybody in every direction. The work will always have to go on whilst the experiment (that's what it feels like for a time) is happening around you.

A peer approach is the most creative, innovative, challenging and unpredictable way of working that requires:

- emotional maturity/emotional intelligence
- a measure of skill in handling the inevitabilities of conflict (and some relish of creative conflict)
- personal autonomy
- willingness to see the value in inter-dependence at the same time.

This may sound like a reconstruction of the human being and it is not far short of this because we do not ordinarily think of people being capable of such responses. Hence the need for anyone thinking of going down this road to consider first:

- Where are we on the spectrum of performance in these kinds of areas?
- What work have we already done?
- How did people respond to it?
- What difference has it made?
- Are people prepared for another internal upheaval?
- Would we be better spending time and energy in moving an inch along the way and succeeding, than in going for the mile and failing at the first step?
- Do we have any idea of what it would mean to work in the ways suggested here?
- And, most important of all, why should we bother?

Unless we know the gains that are to be had – or thought to be had – it is unlikely that people will make the necessary commitment to work out the issues that will face them.

The Starting Point

A good starting place

If there is a good working atmosphere (or one where there is nothing left to lose) then you may have the necessary conditions for making a beginning. A good working atmosphere is one in which there is an appreciation that we need to bring more of the resources in people into the work place, and where there is a recognition that we have a robust enough culture to stand a few bumps and hassles without losing all hope and faith in each other or in what we are aiming to do.

A poor starting place

Thinking this is going to be fun all the time, that it represents some fashionable new idea (which it is often presented as) or having only a select band of enthusiasts who haven't considered what this will mean to the greater majority of the staff.

The best starting place

The best starting place is to recognise that work arises out of the values people hold and that what actually happens reveals the *values in practice*. These tell you where the culture of the organisation is actually at – whatever people say.

An organisation that has real aspirations for developing its people in line with the post-modern assumptions above would have an interest in working out more accurately what that would mean *in this organisation, with these people*, over some realistic timescale.

This is best done with a consultant who has experience. Why? Because this is the most critical aspect of the work. Over-estimate your own capacity for change and you just bring people to their knees to no purpose. Underestimate and you don't have the resources to hand to capitalise on the potential you have unleashed.

A realistic appraisal of where you are and where you could feasibly get to is best done with 'a *speaking partner*³ from outside who can ask the questions, make you think and can look more deeply – like only an outsider can – at the assumptions you bring to the assessment.

Moving into Action

At some point the information gathering has to end and you have to get on with it. The work will depend upon what you have decided from the first phase but will mean for just about everyone:

- Opportunities for personal appraisal of readiness, willingness and suitability. (Each person deciding how far down the spectrum they can get.)
- A chance for teams to explore where they are and how far they think they can get in what timescale. At this point they might need challenging by the consultant either to be more realistic or to 'get real' about their prospects. If more than one team is involved in an organisation, there has to be some parity of development or the organisation risks losing its *alignment* and the whole outfit becoming skewed.
- A working plan for each unit involved and a personal development plan for each individual or group of individuals that have significant relationships with one another.

This may sound like a lot of work yet it isn't – if the conditions are favourable. Why? Because most people are simply identifying the way things work anyway. They are assessing them in the light of a new set of directions – that's all. The real challenge begins when you have to develop mechanisms for releasing the findings, developing the atmosphere of authentic feedback and immediacy of responsiveness.

Implementation

Getting on with it. This cannot be written as a list of specific actions because it varies from unit to unit, organisation to organisation and individual to individual. That is one of the key differences in peer-based organisational development – every situation, every programme is unique depending on the issues and the people involved.

The best analogy might be to compare the consultant's role to that of *organisational coaching*. The consultant stands as a coach in relation to the staff involved in the organisation/unit. Offering them hands-off ways of working, such as via e-mail, may do this. From time-to-time there would be face-to-face development sessions that check and re-align how things are going. Remember, this is not developing individuals or teams but both simultaneously, in a way of working that has a very complex set of inter-relationships.

The quality of the diagnostic plan sets the tone and level of ambition for what will unfold. The meetings are not so frequent that it requires the consultant to come and pitch a tent and live with you indefinitely. It's a recognition that this process is likely to slip, people may have ideas about why and even what to do about it but, as peers learning how to work together, they won't know much about the mechanisms that are best used.

The difficulty then is that the group reproduces traditional or modern mechanisms to deal with something that in a peer-based model is dealt with in very different ways.

³ A phrase we use for talking about various kinds of help that are essentially peer-based. As this suggests, the consultant, in an exercise like this, is another peer – a peer who brings certain kinds of experience and assistance to the meeting but a peer nevertheless.

Appendix 1: Oasis Organisational Client Work

Oasis School of Human Relations consultants have designed and delivered:

- Shaping the future and developing strategic thinking
- Organisational audit, analysis, assessment and feedback
- Organisational redesign and systems renewal
- The design, management and delivery of organisational development
- Shaping and creating a participative learning culture
- Establishing and embedding new organisational culture
- Moving beyond training and into development
- Developing partnership and integrated working approaches
- Externally facilitated self-evaluation and learning processes
- Co-operative inquiry and action learning groups
- Building of leadership and management capacity
- Diversity audit and developing diversity cultures
- Team formation, team development and conflict resolution facilitation
- Assisting the development of evaluation methodologies including collaborative supervision, appraisal and accountability mechanisms
- Project and programme design, management and monitoring
- Whole organisation employee development, well-being and assistance
- Individual developmental consulting – mentoring, executive coaching and practice supervision.