



For Best Results, Partner With Your OD Professional

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Keeping an organization running like a well-oiled machine relies on several things including a clear plan, organized workflow and engaged employees with the proper skills to do the job.

When there is a snag in the system, it can be frustrating trying to pinpoint what is causing delays, missed orders or other backups. It can be further complicated as senior management leans on middle management who orders the rank and file to fix the problem. Clear thinking, new ideas or collaboration can become muddled by strong personalities or fear of speaking candidly. Valuable employees begin to feel frustrated or think the answer is to look for a new employer. Losing skilled employees causes further problems in overall workflow, company strategy and employee morale.

It is at this point that many organizations seek help in getting back on track, and many consultants offer some blanket solutions that may work for a while. However, an OD professional that involves the workforce in finding solutions leads to employee satisfaction, improved workflow and improved organizational design with lasting results.

Many times I encounter prospects who think that having a consultant tell them how to fix the problem will be all that's needed. Perhaps a new org chart will clear things up so operations can resume. While that may provide a temporary course correction, effective results come from clearly identifying the desired outcome and drawing on the expertise of the current workforce in order to make it happen.

Often, companies that have worked with an OD consultant end up feeling more constrained. Many experts merely observe, then prescribe a new workflow solution without asking for collaboration from those on the front line.

An organization's most valuable asset is not the product or service they are selling, it is the experienced skill set of its workers. Recognizing that workforce talent is a priority to business growth is the first step. Leveraging the collective expertise of your employees allows you to place people in positions that enables them to be engaged, motivated and on track. Morale and retention, while difficult to quantify, return dividends when employees feel acknowledged and know they are a valuable asset to your organization.

Even the newest hire can shed light on the process. In fact, they can be invaluable to both management and the OD consultant by sharing their first impressions of their position while it is still fresh in their minds. When I ask a recent hire and a seasoned employee about an identical position within the organization, I nearly always get very different answers. Those answers help identify gaps in the process.

Another advantage that an outside observer has is impartiality. When work groups get together to discuss ideas for improvements or changes within the system, they often fear speaking up due to the personalities in the room or their position within the company. A recent hire may be too afraid to speak candidly, while those that have been there the longest may feel resistant to change, just for change's sake. Many companies also keep the same people working together, rather than mixing up groups to gain new viewpoints or ideas.

To ensure a true improvement there needs to be a conceptual agreement between consultant and organization on the outcomes, metrics or value of the project. This can be difficult to quantify, however, it can be conceptualized. Outcomes might include: Better communication between mid and senior level management demonstrated by a reduction in emergency meetings and long email strings, improved employee performance demonstrated by a reduction in customer wait times or improved shipping dates.

A conceptual agreement, or joint accountability puts the onus back onto the organization to fully participate in seeking and implementing solutions, rather than wait to be told what to do by a consultant. However, there are many internal factors that can derail the agreement, such as vacant key leadership roles that are critical to performing a task or activity, or the point person doesn't have the ability or authority to quickly execute the activity needed to achieve the desired result, or management isn't fully engaged in the effort. When everyone in the organization has skin in the game, they are motivated to see their ideas come to fruition.

Finally, the existing culture of the organization needs to consistently engage employees to understand the why (mission, brand promise, unique selling proposition), the what (job roles and responsibilities), and the how (the behaviors and conduct expected from each individual contributor).

If you are considering engaging an OD professional, selecting one that will function as a collaborator in seeking solutions will quickly set you back on track to success.

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