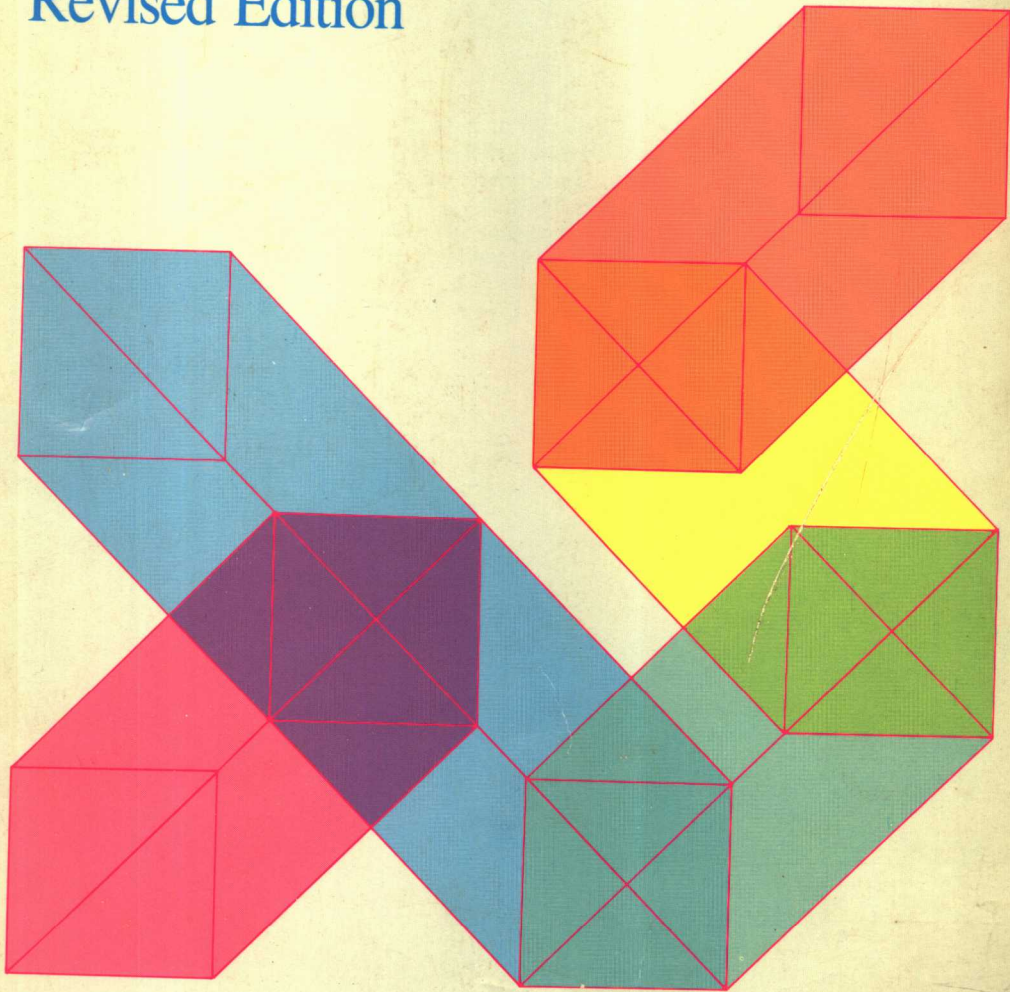


French / Bell / Zawacki

Organization Development

Theory, Practice, Research

Revised Edition



Organization Development

Theory, Practice, and Research

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1983

Revised edition

BUSINESS PUBLICATIONS, INC.
Plano, Texas 75075

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ISBN 0-256-02689-0

Library of Congress Catalog Card No. 82-72370

Printed in the United States of America

3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 K 0 9 8 7 6

ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT

Theory, Practice, and Research

Consulting Editor in Management

John M. Ivancevich
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From Wendell to Marjorie,
From Cecil to Dianne,
From Bob to R. J. Westen

Preface

Organizations and their members are in a bind: productivity lags; costs skyrocket; inflation soars; constraints on decision makers multiply; markets change rapidly; and new demands proliferate. Managers and employees alike may sometimes feel that Sisyphus actually had it pretty easy compared to them.

And things may get worse before they get better.

But organizations are a social invention: humans design them, run them, and work in them. Many problems of organizations can be solved by systematic, enlightened attention, and effort. Organizations are instruments for getting things done that we want to get done. They are indispensable. They are improvable.

One optimistic and proactive strategy for improving the competencies of individuals and groups in organizations (thereby improving the organization itself) is organization development. Organization development (or OD) is a data-based, problem-solving, systems-approach process for improving the functioning of organizations and individuals. OD is an applied discipline based on theories and principles derived from the behavioral sciences. OD takes what works and what's relevant from the behavioral sciences and applies this knowledge to the domain of organizational behavior.

Although organization development is not a remedy for all organizational ills, it has much to offer practicing managers, students of organizational behavior, and persons interested in improving both organizational performance and the "goodness of fit" between the individual, the group, the organization, and its environment.

This book describes the technology, knowledge base, underlying values, and the implications and applications of organization development. We believe it is a reasonably complete statement of theory, practice, and research in OD and hope it is a useful statement for your purposes.

We wish to acknowledge our debt to the authors whose writings we have included; we thank them for their contributions to the field and to this book. In addition, we wish to thank Samir Y. Naguib, Mark L. McConkie, Katherine A. Abeyta, and Anne S. Reints. A special thanks to Jimmie Lousie Zawacki for the many hours of editing she did on the revised edition.

Wendell L. French
Cecil H. Bell, Jr.
Robert A. Zawacki

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montage (mon•tāzh') *n.* 1. a. The act or process of producing a composite picture by combining several distinct pictures, often so that they blend with or into each other. b. Such a composite picture.¹

gestalt (gə•shtālt') *n.* 1. a unified whole: a configuration, pattern, or organized field having specific properties that cannot be derived from the summation of its component parts. 2. an instance or example of such a unified whole.²

Organization Development (OD). In the behavioral science, and perhaps ideal, sense of the term, organization development is a long-range effort to improve an organization's problem-solving and renewal processes, particularly through a more effective and collaborative management of organization culture—with special emphasis on the culture of formal work teams—with the assistance of a change agent, or catalyst, and the use of the theory and technology of applied behavioral science, including action research.³

Our immediate goal in editing this volume is suggested in the three definitions above: We wanted to produce a composite picture of the gestalt known as organization development—a picture that would contain properties greater than and different from the properties of the component parts. So we combed the literature on organization development and related topics looking for significant and seminal writings, organized the writings against an outline designed to cover the topic with both breadth and depth, and generated this anthology that we hope will serve as a resource book for those in-

terested in gaining a fuller understanding of the theory, practice, and research dimensions of organization development. In addition to the immediate goal, we had three more substantive goals—our real reasons for producing the book: we wanted to help clarify the field of organization development; we wanted to help educate those interested in learning more about OD as an instrument for organizational improvement; and we wanted to help “shape” the field in directions we want it to go. Although this is a revised edition of the original anthology, these goals continue to guide our selection processes. The five years between the first edition and this one have brought new conceptual developments as well as new technology to the OD field. We have included these new developments as we continue to try to present a current and comprehensive overview of organization development.

SOME COMMENTS ON CLARIFYING THE FIELD OF ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT

Organization development is an important strategy for improving the effectiveness of organizations and there is considerable literature on the subject. But in spite of the wealth of written material on organization development, there continues to be widespread confusion about what it is and is not, and what it can and cannot accomplish. *Organization development is a prescription for a process of planned organizational change.* The nature and elements of that prescription are described in this book. But the reader should be warned in advance that there is a pronounced lack of clarity and consensus concerning both the whole of OD and the component parts of OD—theorists and prac-

¹ *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam, 1953).

² *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: Random House, 1967).

³ Wendell L. French and Cecil H. Bell, Jr., *Organization Development* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1978), p. 14.

titioners differ widely among themselves on methods, processes, goals, and even definitions of organization development.

Clarifying the field of organization development necessitates addressing and resolving definitional issues, turf issues, and boundary issues as a first step. Semantic clarification is needed: what do the terms *organization development*, *organizational improvement*, and *OD interventions* mean; that is, what do they refer to? There has been little agreement on definitions and what practices are “in” or “out” of the realm of OD. For example, organization development has been described as a process of planned change, as an approach to organizational improvement, as a set of activities, as a set of values, as an educational strategy, as an applied behavioral science discipline, and as a specific set of techniques, that is, a technology. Is OD all of these? Some of these? None of these? It is likely that there is some truth in all these descriptions; however, what is needed is an analytic framework for evaluating statements and assertions concerning OD. Once this is developed, coalescing a workable and acceptable definition of OD should not be too difficult. We make some beginning attempts at building analytic frameworks in Parts One, Four, and Five.

SOME COMMENTS ON HELPING TO INFORM THOSE INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT OD

The field of organization development is now about 25 years old, and it has attracted a large following of practitioners and clients, academicians, and students. The theory and practice of OD have had a substantial impact on the practice of management and the planning of change in organizations. A sizable knowledge base and a moderately sophisticated technology have grown up around OD. Finally, there is a store of clinical experience, anecdotal reporting, and research evidence that suggests that OD is a potent and viable instrument for organization improvement. Granting that organization improvement is not a trivial matter, and granting that OD can be an effective instrument for organization improvement, it seems desirable to examine OD in depth—where it came from and what it is today.

A montage is a composite picture constructed from several distinct pictures. Selected writings of theorists and practitioners having firsthand knowledge of organization devel-

opment were assembled and ordered according to a framework. The separate writings portray different elements and facets of OD; we hope that together they give an understanding of the gestalt known as OD. We assumed that there are many people interested in learning more about organization development, and we believed that a book of readings might be a good vehicle for helping that learning.

We sought moderate breadth and depth in covering the field in the belief that education should consist of knowledge of the subject, and not just acquaintance with it. We included articles that represent the core of the OD literature as well as articles showing how OD relates to other applied behavioral science approaches. We chose some of the classics as well as some “just off-the-presses” articles. Where it seemed appropriate, we chose articles of a more difficult nature if the subject matter did not permit a simple treatment.

The book is directed to the professional practitioner of OD, to graduate and undergraduate students interested in OD, to academicians interested in the topic, and to “those men and women of practical affairs”—managers and action takers in ongoing organizations. Since different readers may be interested in different aspects of the subject, we have deliberately tried to collect articles of interest to a broad range of people.

Perhaps a word should be said about our selection process. The “act or process of producing a composite picture” was a difficult but enjoyable task, one that called for separating figure from ground, substance from form, and wheat from chaff—basically a judgmental task replete with possibilities for human bias and human error. We reviewed hundreds of articles and books and unpublished manuscripts before we settled on these selections. The overriding goal was to achieve a complete and balanced coverage of the subject within the constraints of size and cost of the book. Numerous high-quality selections could not be included for various reasons, especially space limitations. Many of these are noted as Suggested Additional Readings at the end of each part.

SOME COMMENTS ON SHAPING THE FIELD IN DIRECTIONS WE WANT IT TO GO

A desire to help shape the field of organization development was another conscious goal in the preparation of this book. We are biased in our

views of what OD is and is not, in our views of what OD should and should not be, and in our views of what constitutes good and bad practice of OD. These biases helped determine our selections and coverage. We chose descriptions of OD efforts that we think reflect both good practice of OD and an accurate conceptualization of what OD is. We selected articles that deal with some of the thorny conceptual issues that must be resolved if the practice of OD is to advance, and we chose articles critical of and complementary of organization development as it is currently practiced. In those weak areas in the theory or practice of OD we have suggested tentative answers where we could think of them, and have suggested possible ways to discover answers where we could not think of any.

We believe that organization development has some unique characteristics that differentiate it from other organization improvement strategies. We wish to explore and explain these unique features and test to see if others agree. Likewise, we believe that organization development has unique strengths and weaknesses as an organization improvement strategy. These too must be identified and examined. In a sense, until the people working in the field of organization development know what OD *is*, they are relatively powerless to make it what it *should be* (or what they want it to be). And in a way that is the underlying theme of this book: to examine the theory, practice, and research dimensions of organization development in order to improve it, to strengthen both the art and the science of it. An analysis of the current status of organization development reveals several serious but not fatal flaws, such as the lack of a systematic theoretical base, considerable semantic confusion regarding the terms and concepts used, and some serious gaps in the technology available. We believe these flaws can and will be corrected, and we hope this book will contribute toward that end.

There are no doubt several "alternative futures" for the practice of OD, and we wish to promote some of these and discourage others. There is an unseemly faddishness about organization improvement techniques and strategies. A new technique gets introduced, becomes the "rage" and the "in thing" (usually gets reduced to a nickname of capital letters), and then just as rapidly is discarded as people move on to some newer technique. Several problems inhere in such practice: first, both the good and bad aspects of the discarded technique are equally rejected, with the loss of potentially

helpful knowledge and technology; second, systematic evaluation of the discarded technique usually does not get done—specifically *if* it works, *when* and *where* it works, and *why* it works; and third, there is no cumulative building up of a body of practice theory or applied science, which is the hallmark of a successful scientific endeavor. While it is highly unlikely that organization development will be a fad, the forces pushing in that direction are strong. It seems therefore all the more desirable to conduct a careful examination of the unique strengths and weaknesses of OD, and to develop theory and practice to enhance the strengths and eliminate the weaknesses. Organization development appears to be a prescription for a process of planned organizational change that can both improve the effectiveness of organizations and enhance the quality of working life in organizations. If it is truly a viable technique for improving organizations, the reasons for that effectiveness should be understood; and, of course, if it is not a viable technique for improving organizations, the reasons for that should be understood. We believe the weight of evidence is in favor of organization development.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

This second edition has been substantially revised. The first edition contained 53 articles; this edition contains 70 articles. There are 44 new articles. Adding so many new works and authors necessitated severe pruning—we even cut out articles written by ourselves! In all, we deleted 19 articles from the first edition. Such a revision process allowed us to include the significant new developments of the last five years and to craft a 1983 snapshot of the field of OD.

The practice, theory, and research of organization development constitute the topics of interest in this book. Part One begins the story by presenting the history of OD, definitions and descriptions of OD, different kinds of and emphases of OD, and a sketch of other organization improvement strategies. We call this part "Mapping the Territory"—getting to know the turf, domain, and boundaries of organization development. This part paints a broad-brush picture of the scope and contours of the field. Part Two, "Theory and Practice on Change and Changing," provides a background for understanding some of the theoretical underpinnings of OD. Specifically, the nature of planned change and the nature of client systems are ex-

amined in this section. OD practitioners utilize implicit and explicit conceptual schemas regarding change, organizations, and human behavior as they practice in organizations. Some of the more important theoretical formulations are highlighted in Part Two. There is no comprehensive theory of organization development, but the practice of OD is based on partial theories and a variety of conceptual formulations.

Part Three describes many of the interventions central to OD—the actual technology and practices available to clients and consultants. This section has been expanded considerably in the second edition to include a wider range of interventions and to describe more recent developments. Part Three is especially relevant for readers who want to know what actually happens in OD programs. Part Four focuses on interventions that may or may not be strictly OD—interventions that are largely supplemental or complementary to OD programs. Overall, the essays in these two parts describe interventions directed toward individuals, teams, groups in conflict, and total systems. What techniques are available, how and when they might be used, and the conditions that may lead to success or failure are covered in these sections.

Part Five continues the description of intervention techniques applicable to organizations but broadens the scope considerably. Numerous structural interventions available for effecting organization improvement are discussed here—sociotechnical systems, job enrichment, quality of work life, job redesign, MBO, and the like. These interventions are compared and contrasted against criteria for inclusion in the category *organization development*. Since these change strategies are clearly important and efficacious, we try both to present the strategies and also to analyze their underlying assumptions.

Part Six is an entirely new section. Its focus—power, politics, and organization

development—directs attention to a long-neglected area in OD. Theory and practice in OD have been criticized for ignoring or being soft on issues relating to organizational politics and power. That situation is changing, as shown by the selections in Part Six.

Part Seven shifts attention to another key aspect of the practice of OD: organizing and implementing an OD program. Issues of central concern to consultant and client alike are covered, such as getting started, setting the contract, consultant-client relations, and developing an overall strategy. This section deals with some dimensions and dynamics that we believe can make the difference between success and failure in OD programs.

Part Eight discusses applications of OD in various settings and situations. The practice of OD is widespread. We wanted to give a sense of the range of application of OD techniques; we wanted to discuss some of the implications of launching and conducting OD programs in different contexts. It is likely that the Compleat Practitioner needs to know how different organizational contexts impact OD activities. What may be successful and relevant in one situation may not be in another.

Part Nine, "Research on Organization Development," addresses the key issue: does OD work? Evaluating the effects of an OD program is a difficult task. Some of the problems inherent in this kind of evaluation research are covered in this section, as well as some of the more exemplary research efforts. We believe this section is a very important part of the book.

Finally, Part Ten deals with the future of organization development. Where is the field going? What are some of the unresolved issues that need attention? What does the "balance sheet" look like going into the 1980s?

We think the study of organizational improvement strategies, in general, and the study of organization development, in particular, are important and exciting arenas. We hope you share these sentiments.

PART ONE

Mapping the Territory

The subject matter of this book is organization development, a relatively specific kind of planned change effort aimed at helping members of organizations do the things they want to do—better. We have attempted to fashion a systematic examination of organization development in order that the reader may determine the applicability, utility, and viability of this particular approach as a means of organization improvement. Making sense out of the diverse activities that currently go under the label *OD* is a difficult task: there is a rubbery, imprecise quality to most of the terms and definitions in the area; practices and practitioners are widely divergent; what one practitioner labels *OD* may not be so designated by other practitioners or observers. In this section we shall attempt to build a common base of understanding and communication.

Organization development theory and practice focus primarily on the human and social aspects of organizations, and view organizational behavior as consisting essentially of coordinated goal-directed activities of a number of people. There are other possible approaches to understanding and intervening in organizations—one can focus on organization structure and design, technology and task design, or organization-environment congruence, for example. Organization development programs often attend to these issues, but the principal focus is on the human aspects of the organization conceived as a social system.

In Part One we begin at the beginning—mapping the territory of organization development. What is *OD*? What is not *OD*? What

characteristics differentiate *OD* from other improvement programs? What are some of the varieties of *OD*? And what is the place of *OD* in the vast array of organization improvement strategies? Satisfactory answers must be provided to these basic questions in order to engage in meaningful discourse about organization development. The issues of definition, identification, and specification of *OD* will ultimately be resolved through dialogue and consensus; we have attempted to contribute to that resolution through the introductory comments and selections in Part One.

Whether or not organization development can (or should) be identified as a “unified whole” or an “organized field” at this time is problematic and debatable. Two extreme positions may be advanced relative to identifying and specifying *OD*. At one extreme, an all-inclusive position, organization development can serve as a rubric, a classification scheme, for all organizational improvement and all organizational development technologies and activities. In this scheme, *OD* would likely not be a unified whole or organized field, since the differences between technologies and activities would be so great they would obviate the usefulness of the classification system; *OD* could mean virtually anything to anyone. At the other extreme, a narrowly inclusive position, organization development would refer to only a few techniques and activities meeting stringent requirements for inclusion in the concept. In this scheme, *OD* would likely be a more unified whole, but many activities and techniques currently considered as *OD* activities would be ex-

cluded from the concept. Everyone could agree on what is and is not OD; but rigid and closely drawn boundaries might turn away many colleagues and supporters, and might lead the practice of OD away from the cutting edge of applied behavioral science advances.

We advocate a middle-ground position that would view organization development as an organized field, and that would put the determination of what is and is not OD—and what is partially OD and partially not OD—on a more systematic and rational basis. We hope to advance the middle-ground position by specifying what we believe are the distinguishing characteristics of OD, and by suggesting some criteria for establishing approximate boundaries and making inclusion-exclusion judgments.

TOWARD A DEFINITION OF ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT

The words *organization development* refer to something about organizations and developing them. According to 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 goal, through division of labor and function, and through a hierarchy of authority and responsibility."¹ Organizations are social systems possessing characteristics described by Schein, and OD efforts are directed toward organizations or major subparts of them.

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 possibilities of, to further, to improve, or to enhance *something*. Two elements of this definition seem important: first, development may be an act, process, or end state; second, development refers to "bettering" something.

Combining these words suggests that organization development is the act, process, or result of furthering, advancing, or promoting the growth of an organization. According to these definitions, organization development is anything done to "better" an organization. But this definition is too broad and all-inclusive. It can refer to almost anything done in an organizational context that enhances the organization—hiring a person with needed skills, firing an incompetent, merging with another organization, installing a computer, re-

moving a computer, buying a new plant, and so on. This definition serves neither to identify and specify nor to delimit (perhaps something done to "worsen" an organization would be ruled out). The term *organization development* must be given more meaning, must refer to something more specific, if productive discourse on the subject is desired.

Let us try another way of defining organization development. The following definitions of OD have been suggested in the literature:

Organization development is an effort (1) *planned*, (2) *organization-wide*, and (3) *managed from the top*, to (4) *increase organization effectiveness and health* through (5) *planned interventions in the organization's "processes," using behavioral-science knowledge*.²

Organization development (OD) is a response to change, a complex educational strategy intended to change the beliefs, attitudes, values, and structure of organizations so that they can better adapt to new technologies, markets, and challenges, and the dizzying rate of change itself.³

Organization development is the strengthening of those human processes in organizations which improve the functioning of the organic system so as to achieve its objectives.⁴

Organization renewal is the process of initiating, creating, and confronting needed changes so as to make it possible for organizations to become or remain viable, to adapt to new conditions, to solve problems, to learn from experiences, and to move toward greater organizational maturity.⁵

OD can be defined as a planned and sustained effort to apply behavioral science for system improvement, using reflexive, self-analytic methods.⁶

Organization development is a process of planned change—change of an organization's culture from one which avoids an examination of social processes (especially decision making, planning and communication) to one which institutionalizes and legitimizes this examination.⁷

² Richard Beckhard, *Organization Development: Strategies and Models* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1969), p. 9.

³ Warren G. Bennis, *Organization Development: Its Nature, Origins, and Prospects* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1969), p. 2.

⁴ Gordon L. Lippitt, *Organization Renewal* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1969), p. 1.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁶ Richard Schmuck and Matthew Miles, *Organization Development in Schools* (Palo Alto, Calif.: National Press Books, 1971), p. 2.

⁷ Warner Burke and Harvey A. Hornstein, *The Social Technology of Organization Development* (Fairfax, Va.: Learning Resources Corp., 1972), p. xi.

¹ Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Psychology*, 3d. ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1980), p. 15.