

DIGITAL BEAT

OD Wired

By Darin E. Hartley

Define OD,
then find the
right tool for
your needs.

Organization development is one of those terms that gets thrown around in the training world. Get any group of workplace learning and performance professionals together and you will get a plethora of definitions. According to the OD Portal (www.odportal.com), the definition for organization development is, and I like its succinctness, “the practice of changing people and organizations for positive growth.” If you ask my nine-year-old son what OD is, he’ll tell you

that it’s the cute little dog that makes Garfield’s life... “interesting.” What is crucial is that you and your colleagues are in agreement about what OD means.

Organization development includes such activities as career planning, team-building, organizational assessments, training, change management, leadership development, human capital management, and others, depending on the person or organization defining the term.

If someone aspires to dive deeply into

the field of organization development, he or she might consider seeking a degree in the field, undergraduate or graduate. In fact, you can get a doctorate from the University of Phoenix Online in Management of Organizational Leadership.

OD e-learning courseware

If you or your team or organization is working through OD issues and initiatives and you need to gain some insights into the field or just want to get back up to speed, you might consider some of the e-learning courseware that's out there.

Here's a partial list of resources:

- <🔗> hbsp.harvard.edu
- <🔗> netg.com
- <🔗> skillssoft.com.

OD systems and tools

There are a variety of tools to help organizations with OD. Because OD practices can be diverse and entail a variety of underlying practices, multiple systems and tools can support different aspects of OD work.

For example, survey tools enable you to create your own assessments to answer questions you have about your organization. Ready-to-use organizational assessments can be purchased as technology-enabled or nontechnology products. You should know what your end-user and functional requirements are for any tool or system you're considering.

Survey/Assessment tools. These tools are used by organization development specialists (and many others) to develop Web-based assessments or surveys for the Web. An important distinction is that some of them are used for custom development of opinion or related surveys only. Some of them can be used for surveys and knowledge assessments. That's important to know because sometimes you will need scoring functionality—for example, ensuring that trainees get a minimum score on a test. In such cases, you might use a system such as Question

Mark. Sometimes, you need only the roll-up data associated with employee satisfaction or job roles. In those cases, you'd probably opt to use one of the survey tools such as Survey Monkey or Zoomerang. There are hundreds of these types of tools on the market.

Here's a sampling:

- <🔗> questionmark.com
- <🔗> surveymonkey.com
- <🔗> zoomerang.com
- <🔗> compendiumcorp.com This company custom builds organizational assessments, including employee opinion, customer satisfaction, multisource, and capabilities surveys.
- <🔗> brainbench.com This company has off-the-shelf surveys and a custom development service for surveys on a variety of topics.

Off-the-Shelf Assessments. These are pre-built and ready for use. They generally focus on organization development functional competencies and tasks. These are great tools if you have a particular model you're trying to use inside an organization. And since most of these assessments have been developed, piloted, and validated over years, you can use them with relative competence. The key is to know exactly what you're trying to assess so you get an off-the-shelf assessment that will work best for you. That includes knowing the functionality and outcomes of the assessments and any technological requirements.

Here are a few:

- The Organization Assessment by people³. This tool focuses on the IT human capital in your organization; <🔗> people3.com.
- CPP Assessments; CPP has multiple assessments including MBTI (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator), the Strong Interest Inventory for career management, Thomas Kilman Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI), CPI 260 for working relationships, and CPI 434 for leadership and coaching; <🔗> cpp.com.

Ten Tips for Successful OD

1. Become a steward and messenger for your organization's strategic business initiatives.
2. Create hooks between your organization's strategic business initiatives and any OD solutions you create.
3. If you decide to have a technology-enabled OD solution, ensure that you know and define the explicit functional requirements so that your purchase is the best fit possible.
4. Talk with other departments or divisions so that you establish a leverage point for cost and resource sharing, assuming there are parallel needs elsewhere in the organization.
5. Validate your OD solutions with your peers if possible. Don't build a solution in your cube and expect it to be adopted across the organization.
6. Establish metrics, preferably business metrics, for your OD solution prior to implementation.
7. When considering a technology-enabled solution, participate in a demonstration alone first. If the demo shows promise, get together a group of stakeholders for their input.
8. Don't sign long-term contracts for technology-enabled solutions unless you're working with a proven entity and you're sure your business won't change immensely during the terms of your agreement.
9. Don't be afraid to try multiple solutions together to get the best solution. Organizational needs are diverse between populations, so it's increasingly difficult to find one provider that can do everything you need.
10. Document the lessons learned.

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Your Input

To suggest new technologies you'd like covered, contact Darin Hartley at dhartley@intrepidls.com.

Human Capital Management Systems.

These include such products as Peoplesoft and SAP, which are designed to integrate a host of HR functionalities so that data can be entered once and leveraged multiple times across key HR activities such as recruiting, on-boarding, compensations, HR information systems, and training.

Because of the sheer complexity of HCM systems, their implementation can be trying. Like with other technology-enabled tools, it's important that the human processes underneath are sound.

The beat goes on

If you want to use technology-enabled tools to help assess your organization, make sure you know your functional requirements explicitly. Know also that you'll have to pilot some of these new technologies to work out the kinks. Concrete functional requirements definition, thoughtful system and tool selection, pilots, and revisions are all part of the digital beat of OD work.

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