ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT OR TRAINING?

changing concern from "how" to "why" for total organization development

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One currently popular definition of the effective manager is "one who can make more good than poor decisions based on inadequate information." I believe this definition contains two assumptions about the nature of organizations which have led us until recently to focus inappropriately on individual development through managerial training (both on- and off-the-job). These assumptions are:

- that the manager himself must make the decisions (the "courageous captain on the lonely bridge" image)

- that the inadequacy of information is a regrettable but realistic view of organizational life.

These assumptions have prevented us from perceiving the need to move beyond the development of individual supervisors and their functional work teams to the attempt to develop total organizations.[1,2] (By "development" I mean increased effectiveness and contribution, rather than just efficiency, and also increased flexibility, rather than reliance on unconscious assumptions and traditional methods and "styles."[3])

MEANS—END ANALYIS

Lest I seem to underestimate the need for effective decision-making in the organization, let me illustrate my thesis with a favorite and powerful tool of decision-making theorists, namely, Means-Ends Analysis. Briefly, this tool is used to help decision-makers develop pathways or "chains" to help clarify both the ends (desired conditions) in a given situation and the means (actions) for moving toward the achievement of those ends (see Figure 1).

At any given point in this staircase, asking the question "How?" will focus attention down the chain to "do-able" actions, while asking the question "Why?" will focus attention up the chain to the "desirable" conditions (short and/or long-range).

My primary concern is that management "training" has tended to focus on the "How?" type of question (How can we improve executives' skills in various managerial functions? or, How can we get a particular executive to be more cooperative with other functions?). While such efforts may help him (or her) personally improve in some of the indicators of effectiveness and flexibility listed below, they in no way guarantee that this personal growth will be transferred into contributions to increased system-wide effectiveness and flexibility.[4]

It seems to me that only if those who have been responsible for in-company and off-the-job training programs can turn a major portion of their attention to the "Why?" questions (Why do marketing and R & D have such a high level of conflict? Why do field sales personnel seem to be putting such "cushions" in their suggested quotas?), can we begin to develop significant data to be summarized and (courageously) fed back up the line to top management. In any management training program which relates to on-the-job application, confusions and resentments about unclear or unpredictable organization goals, priorities, standards and rewards are usually expressed.[5] It is only if these are fed back to top management that training and personnel specialists can say they are fulfilling their responsibility of keeping a finger on the pulse of the organization, wary for signs of poor circulation and tone and the reduced energy and drive which are likely to follow.

ORGANIZATION CLIMATE

Any attempt at a "systems" approach to training and development must focus first on the organization's "culture" or "climate,"[6,7] looking at such indications of organization health as:

- system-wide understanding of and commitment to long and short-range objectives, priorities, measurement tools and reward systems

- sufficient trust and openness among levels and functions so that "bad news" and/or confusion about goals, etc., gets fed back in

Figure 1.

Action Steps

ENDS
Desired Conditions

MEANS
Do-able Actions

How? Why?
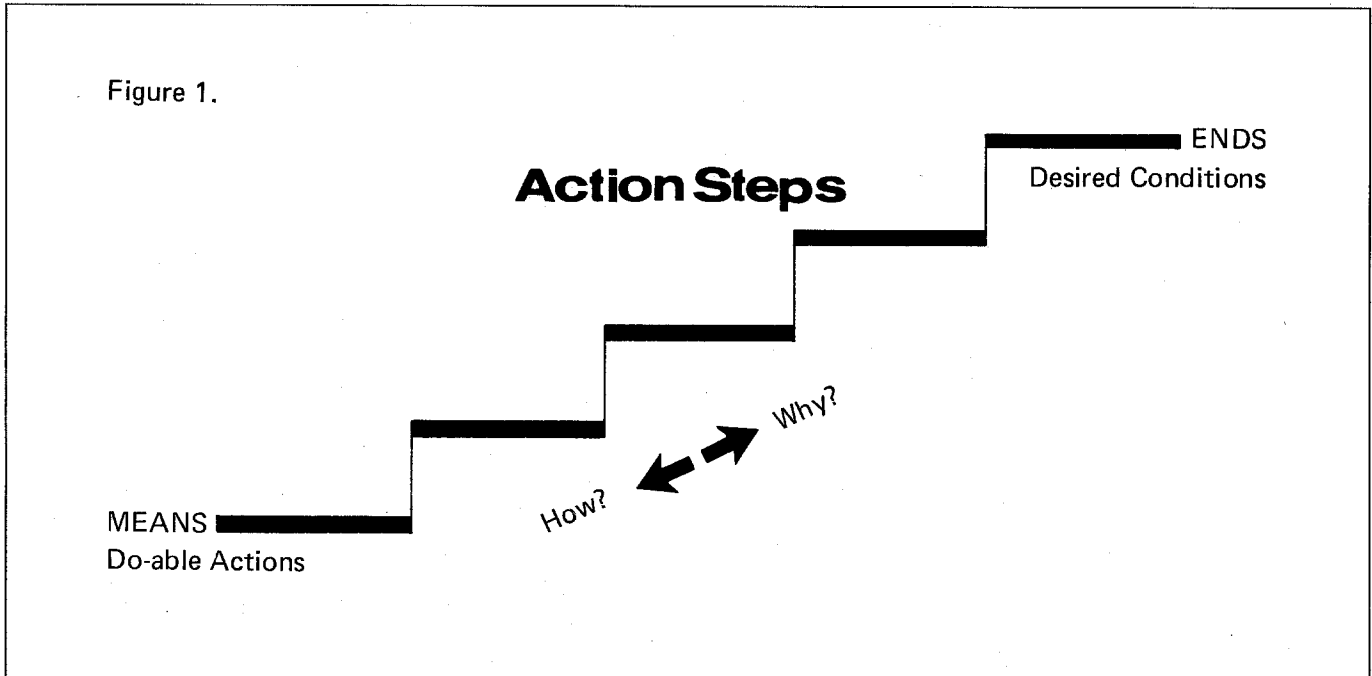
time to take corrective action (or is only good news shared while self-protective devices are being built in anticipation of trouble?)

● sufficient sensitivity to the dangers of inducing over-anxiety, over-dependence and over-competition so that supervisors and managers recognize the difficulty of changing behavior patterns which have been "rewarded" in the past but also guard against their own temptation to "retreat to the familiar" — i.e., doing their subordinates' jobs

● concentration of change efforts on the "significant few" areas which will have a multiplier effect payoff in results, morale or both. Consideration must be given to the question, "Which areas do various members perceive as significant?"

● overall emphasis on *resolution* rather than inappropriate avoidance, suppression or "sharpening" of the inevitable interpersonal and/or interdepartmental conflicts — supervisors and managers skilled in participating in both one-to-one and group discussion sessions in which the concentration is on (a) stating the problem in such a way that the group does not become defensive, (b) supplying essential facts and clarifying areas of freedom, (c) drawing out ideas and feelings, (d) restating accurately

these ideas and feelings, (e) summarizing the goals and progress of the discussion frequently[8]

● availability of rapid feedback on performance in a supportive, problem-solving manner: "It has been shown that refusal to change . . . can be reduced from 50 per cent to 3.4 per cent by training foremen to conduct discussions that permit release of emotional expression as well as an opportunity to participate in solving the problem of change."[9]

● the use of structural changes to facilitate behavior change[10] (e.g., changing work flow, interaction patterns, information flow, etc.) rather than attitude change strategies (e.g., providing information, "tell and sell," sensitivity training, etc.)

SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES

In summary, I see three significant differences between manager training and organization development:

Training Focus

1. Concerned with helping individual cope with change

2. Department or function-centered

3. Organizational policies and practices often inhibit application

O D Focus

1. Concerned with helping organization cope with change

2. Organization and mission-centered

3. Top management involved in planning and implementing applications

Thus, while I see OD as involving analytical and interpersonal skills (both during the diagnostic phases and the change phases) which training programs may help develop, I believe the long-range systematic development, which is required for most modern complex organizations in order to balance their functional capacities with their managerial and integrative capacities, requires consideration of all the elements of organizational excellence which I have listed above. It is not yet possible to evaluate the few full-scale OD efforts to be found, but I do feel that they have clearly differentiated themselves from training programs. The key points in this distinction are best described by two OD practitioners as follows:

"Organization Development is an effort

    1. planned

    2. organization-wide

    3. managed from the top

4. to increase organizational effectiveness and health

5. through planned interventions in the organization's 'processes' using behavioral science knowledge."[11]

"The Organization Development Laboratory program provides a method of learning how to learn from experience and how to organize a method of learning to develop a climate whereby both managers and organizations are neither the victims nor the resisters of needed change but rather the progenitors and facilitators of planned change."[12]

The diagrams and bibliography below are designed to assist the reader in "learning to learn" more about both training and organization development, in the belief that such efforts will lead to success experiences and their valuable by-products. These include enhanced feelings of adequacy, competence and self-worth and the encouragement to engage in calculated risk-taking related to long-term personal and organizational needs rather than "retreating to the familiar" and being overly concerned with self-protection and/or short-run personal aggrandizement.

When each of us (1) feels accepted as a worthwhile person who has resources to contribute to the group, (2) expects to be given reasonable support when taking risks, (3) believes our behavior has an influence on what happens around us and (4) perceives a disparity between our "self-image" and our impact on others, then, I feel, we are likely to facilitate personal and organizational growth, flexibility and effectiveness.

THEORY "Z"

We may even modify the manager's dilemma described at the beginning of this article. That is, we may develop an organizational culture in which it is recognized that significant information can be developed by and drawn from many sources within the organization. It is also seen, within such a culture, that decision-making can be delegated to individuals and groups who are closest to the problem situations, and for whom such delegation would be a positive motivational and learning experience, likely to increase their feelings of meaningful membership in, and "loyalty" to, the organization.[13]

Figure 2
THEORY "Z"[14]
A "Systems" Approach to Individual and Organizational Satisfaction and Effectiveness
Some generalizations applicable to:
. . . the disadvantaged
. . . the modest helper
. . . the exceptional executive

DEVELOPMENT AND FULFILLMENT OF "EXPECTATIONS" AND ORGANIZATIONAL INNOVATIONS (depending on individual background and organizational "culture"—norms, traditions, etc.)	usually come from	GROWTH (in knowledge, skills, energy, ego strength, etc.)[15]
GROWTH	comes from	CHANGE (in attitudes, knowledge, behavior, objectives, roles, interactions, etc.)[16]
CHANGE	comes from	WILLINGNESS TO RISK AND ABSORB UNCERTAINTY AND (often) HOSTILITY[17]
WILLINGNESS TO RISK	comes from	PERCEPTION OF A "REASONABLE" PROSPECT OF "REWARD" (not too high or low a probability)[18]
NEED TO RISK	usually leads to	SOME DEGREE OF ANXIETY[19]
	BUT	
ANXIETY (which often leads to effective problem-solving actions) also	often leads to	REDUCED PROBLEM-SOLVING ABILITY[20]
REDUCED PROBLEM-SOLVING ABILITY	usually leads to	FRUSTRATION[21]
FRUSTRATION	frequently leads to	RIGID BEHAVIOR[22]
RIGID BEHAVIOR	usually leads to	ESCAPE BEHAVIOR AND DEFENSE MECHANISMS[23]

Figure 3

A "MANAGEMENT BY OBJECTIVES" APPROACH
TO
ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND FLEXIBILITY [24]

BARRIERS	METHODS	SKILLS
Defensiveness and Mistrust	Meaningful Work	Building Mutual Trust
Time Mismanagement	Agreement on Priorities	Building Mutual Respect
Conflict Avoidance	Meaningful Indicators	Listening and Expressing Understanding
Goal Ambiguity	Specific Goals and Sub-Goals	Appropriate Leveling
Delayed Feedback	Rapid Feedback	Supportive Coaching
Solution Seeking	Problem Anticipation	Analysis and Creativity

Figure 4

ORGANIZATION POTENTIAL IS MORE LIKELY TO BE REALIZED WHEN MANAGERS.... [25]

- support and reward calculated risk-taking by subordinates
- concentrate on priorities — the "significant few"
- avoid "retreating to the familiar," i.e., doing their subordinates' jobs
- emphasize resolution rather than suppression of interpersonal and/or interdepartmental conflict
- accept the difficulty of changing behavior patterns which have been "rewarded" in the past
- recognize the paradoxical needs in themselves and others for freedom and dependency, change and stability, acceptance and respect, etc.
- stimulate individuals to self-competition and encourage appropriate inter-group competition

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