WORKING TODAY AS IF TOMORROW MATTERED:
A CHALLENGE TO THE PROFESSION
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The title of an article I wrote recently, "The Brighter the Light, the Darker the Shadow" provides me with a starting point for this article. What it means is that the better we do as OD (Organizational Development) practitioners, while operating in today's prevailing paradigm, the faster we are hastening the arrival of several major global challenges. More specifically, If we help our corporations become more competitive and more productive, we are also speeding up the assault on the environment and adding to the pressures of a creaking economic system. There are major issues looming on the horizon which are not pleasant to look at, and our continued success only brings these issues closer faster.

So what are we to do? My recent explorations have led me to the belief that humanity will reach a "decision," perhaps unconsciously, about whether or not there will be a sustainable biosystem on the planet within the next 30 years. If this choice is to be conscious then, within our profession, we must decide whether or not we wish to play a role. We already have many of the skills that will be necessary, but we need more and we need to lead in pushing the limits of the scope of our present mindsets. If we are to have any role in a sustainable future, the profession of Organization Development must begin transforming itself in radical ways right now.

I want to begin with a little story about two frisky young frogs. They liked to have jumping contests to see who could jump the highest and who could jump the farthest. One day they were engaging in their favorite pastime of competing with each other, and suddenly found that they had landed in a pail half full of milk. They looked at each other and asked "Now what are we going to do? Here we are in this pail of milk, and we can't get out!"

One of the frogs was a bit of a pessimist, and soon gave up, sinking sadly and slowly to the bottom. The other frog thought "Maybe what I have to do is just keep doing what I'm doing, and see what comes of it." So he kept paddling away. He paddled all night long, paddled all the next day, and the next night, and eventually found himself standing on a lump of butter! He jumped out of the pail and hopped away sadly, because his friend was no longer there to jump with him, but at least he had hung in there and was optimistic, and found a way through eventually, even though he didn't understand what that way would be at first.

This is where I think we are right now, not just in our profession, but across the whole society. We need to start asking new questions, and we don't even know what those questions are yet. This is a time to get our answers questioned! A new exploration is what's called for, and that's what I'm challenging us to do. Not that it isn't already happening, but I want to add to the momentum that is there.

About 30 years ago, Herb Shepard and Dick Beckhard both "invented" the term "OD". They used to tease each other a lot about who said it first. In fact, those of you who have been around the network for a long time may remember an article in which Dick and Herb were both taking credit for the title "Organization Development".

So let's say that our field is 30 years old. the reason for looking back 30 years is that I'm going to ask us to look 30 years in the future throughout this article, suggesting that we're halfway to some point. I also ask us all to reflect on whether OD has become an "end" in itself, or can it be a "means" to creating a workable future? To repeat, I believe, along with many other scientists today, that we will be making a choice as a species within the next 30 years about what quality of life, if any, will be possible on the planet.

This article focuses on three areas that I think are important for us to pay attention to. I want to integrate mother nature, economics and population; explore how they interact with each other; and highlight some of the real dilemmas we'll have to face soon in how we're operating in our human systems.

Second, I will focus in on the issue of responsibility and "mindset." You'll notice that the "set" of mindset is emphasized, because we tend to hold the prevailing paradigm pretty solidly once we learn it. Making a shift in mindset requires a significant commitment.

Last, I'll review opportunities we have in OD for being a major contributor to the difficult challenges we'll be facing over the next few years, if we choose to take on that task.

GROWTH RATES AND DOUBLINGS

Before we get into all of this, there's one thing that is important to understand. This is the idea of growth rate. We talk about growth in business and growth of the economy and so on, but we never question whether growing is the right thing to be doing. I don't think most of us really understand what growth rates really are about.

As a former mathematician, I've always been fascinated with exponential curves such as the one on in figure one. We can understand how these curves "take off" by exploring the concept of "doubling," or how long it takes for something to double in absolute size.

FIGURE ONE GOES ABOUT HERE

Doubling the size of something (such as a company's gross revenues) may not seem to be that big of an issue, but let's see how the exponential curve works. Assume that you have a piece of photocopy paper that is big enough to be folded in half 40 times. Each fold doubles the thickness. How thick do you think that paper will be after 40 doublings? Usually people guess anything from a few inches thick to several feet thick.

Actually, forty doublings will reach to the moon! If we look at what happens when we double things, the first fold gives us 2 thicknesses; the second fold, 4 thicknesses and so on. At the ninth fold we find that we have 512 thicknesses, which is approximately as thick as a ream of paper with it's wrapping on. Nine more folds, up to 18, and we've got 512 reams of paper in a stack. The thirty ninth fold will be a 125,000 miles thick; and the fortieth fold will be 250,000 miles thick -- just reaching the moon!

That's how the exponential curve takes off. And, if you think about it, the kind of thinking that works pretty well when a given growth or change curve is flat, or relatively flat, may not be the kind of thinking that will resolve complex challenges when the curve turns the corner and becomes very steep. We should note that we have already turned that corner relative to the growth of many "dangerous" curves. Einstein's oft quoted statement that 'we can never solve a complex problem from within the level of consciousness that created it' takes on clearer meaning in this light.

So we're now on the steep part of the curve, trying harder and harder to be effective in our organizations, using ways of thinking that worked well when the curve was flat (i.e. when the pace of change was much slower). Those same modes of thinking aren't working so well now that the curve has gotten steep (i.e. the pace of change is now very rapid).

Another aspect of growth rates that we need to consider is how long it takes for a given growth rate to double in absolute size. There is a very simple way to find out -- simply divide the annual percentage growth rate into the number 70. So for example, a 7% growth rate doubles every ten years. A 15% growth rate will double every four years and eight months.

The consequences of sustained growth rates are something we need to pay attention to. I know of a number of corporations now that are pledging themselves to 10% or 15% growth rates on an annual basis. What this means is that at the end of the 30 year frame we're focusing on, an organization that sustains a 10% annual growth rate will be approxi- mately 20 times larger than it is today in absolute terms. Maintaining a 15% growth rate, which many moderately large corporations are committing themselves to today, will lead to an organization that is 75 times larger in 30 years! So the absolute change from one year to the next gets to be quite immense. With this growth we're also talking about 75 times as much withdrawal of resources, 75 times as much waste product, and so on, unless the growth comes from non manufacturing kinds of things.

If we reflect on these absolute increases, in conjunction with downsizing and keeping head count low and so on, it's little wonder that people are feeling more pressure than ever in their work these days.

ECOLOGY, ECONOMICS, POPULATION OD

Let me review with you rather quickly an integration of mother nature (Earth, Air, Fire and Water), economics, and the population as a result of human activities on the planet. These challenges are also subject to the growth rate pressures we have just reviewed.

First, consider the Earth. We can see what some of the implications are for a 10% to 15% growth rate in terms of some of the physical things that are happening to the earth -- including the loss of topsoil and the growth of deserts; the draw on nonrenewable natural resources; and the rapid increase of toxic wastes and trash.

I'd also like to suggest that perhaps the agricultural revolution, which is now about 10,000 years old, has passed its peak. Up until 10,000 years ago, the human species, like other species,

limited its population to the amount of food that was available in the immediate area. Once we learned to grow crops on a regular basis, if we wanted more people all we had to do was plant more acreage.

I'd like to suggest that perhaps the story of Cain and Abel from the Old Testament is related to this first major human revolution, because it comes from about that time in human history. Cain was a farmer. Cain needed more land. Able was a shepherd. If Cain was to raise his crops, he had to keep the flocks of sheep off of "his" land, so violence ensued.

Today we find that the net usable acreage is declining. The net productivity around the planet of agriculture has been declining; the total amount of fish caught each year is also declining. We don't know for sure if these are permanent down turns, but for the last few years we've seen declining production, and it may be that we've reached the limits of our agricultural potential.

Relative to the AIR, I think it is pretty well known that the release of toxic emissions and carbon dioxide are becoming problematic. We've all been told to stay indoors on occasion because there's too much pollution in the air. It could also be that the increasing violence of storms may have something to do with human activity.

In the area of FIRE, it's now well demonstrated that the chlorine compounds that are generically referred to as CFC's are the main culprit in reducing the ozone layer and creating an ozone hole every year. What is not commonly known, but is beginning to get a little attention in the press, is that well over half of the CFC's that have already been released aren't even up there yet! And each year we are still surprised when the scientists tell us that the new hole over Antarctica is larger than last year's. Even here in North America, Dermatologists are noting a huge increase in sun related malignant melanomas.

Sixty percent of the CFC molecules that have been released into the atmosphere are still rising. Once they get to the upper atmosphere, each chlorine molecule continues to gobble up ozone molecules for 50 to 150 years. I don't think the situation with the ozone layer is going to go away and I don't think it matters if we wear sunscreen and put on glasses because the ultimate effect of ultra violet radiation is on the DNA, and this affects the small single cell plants that are near the surface of the ocean, which are the basis of our food chain.

Just as the hole in the ozone layer can damage human vision, it also affects the vision of the bees that are counted on to pollinate our crops, and it's going to be hard to fit Raybans to bees!

In addition, after over 40 years of nuclear energy, this country still does not have a national policy for storing nuclear wastes. I think we're going to have a long term visitation from "fire" challenges.

Relative to WATER, how often are we seeing these days that we have to be careful about the water we drink, be careful about eating the fish? Right now in many parts of the country, there are quarantines on various kinds of shell fish. Never before in human history have we drained the fresh water aquifers that underlie the farming areas of the world so rapidly.

In addition, we are experiencing severe floods and severe droughts more frequently than at any other time in modern history -- with a growing number of scientists suggesting that these "acts of God" are also related to the consequences of human activity.

So these are mother nature's statements to us. Obviously, she's not real happy; and she WILL restore the balance. And she probably won't ask us how to do it!

Let's now look at the ECONOMIC SYSTEM. The first point I want to make is that all the primary economic models that are in use today were developed when most business enterprise was subnational. They were developed when there needed to be no concern about the depletion of resources, and when nobody was too concerned about the toxic or other kinds of waste products that were created.

Today, in fact, those same economic models reward organizations for NOT adding a cost for extracted minerals. A copper wire company, for example, couldn't stay in business if it charged for the copper depletion. And it probably couldn't stay in business if it charged the effects on the environment of the solvents and the emissions that are required in the production of the copper wire. So we don't include those costs in the pricing of our goods.

Further, today there's global business, global cash flow, global migration of workers -- there are tens of millions of people migrating across boundaries right now trying to find work. We have global media, broadcasting "Dallas" into the least developed parts of the world. We have global arms trade, and we have global trash. None of these are accounted for by the prevailing economic models.

But we DO have a growth imperative; there is no way we can maintain our present economic system and not grow!. Most ecologists, even the most radical ones, are still talking about how we have to maintain growth. Vice President Gore, who is the first elected environmentalist of note, talks about restoring growth in our economy. We have to keep the economy growing.

The idea of borrowing money and paying back with interest, or investing to earn interest, is important for us to pay attention to also. What this tends to do is to make the wealthy wealthier and the poor poorer because presumably wealthier people have money to loan to poorer people and the poorer people have to find some means to pay back both the principle and the interest.

The growth in the amount of debt, not just in the developing countries, but around the world, is increasing at an annual rate of growth of 10% a year. This means, as we saw earlier, that the absolute amount of debt on the planet will double every seven years. This is faster than the annual rate of economic growth almost everywhere in the world. In fact, in the U.S. we are now spending about fifty cents of every dollar we spend at some level of the economic cycle to pay off interest. Obviously, there are limits to how far we can go with that. As the agricultural and industrial revolutions wind down, we are likely to have some major difficulties.

Don't we also consider our own sense of well being to be a function of how well we're doing as an economy? Don't we watch the stock market and become concerned when the gross domestic

product is only up 2% for the year; check to see how our pension funds are doing; and looking up our investments to see if we have made any money?

Let's look now at population. The global population is a time bomb that is ticking and will "go off" regardless of what we do about the global environment and the global economy. At a 2% growth rate, it will double every 35 years. There will be over 10 billion people on the planet in 30 years, most of them desperately poor.

Global demographics suggest that approximately 6% of the world's population is what we could call "affluent," meaning they have extra money to spend. And that's a declining percentage because the wealthiest people are also controlling their birthrate.

Approximately 9% of the people on the planet are called "middle class," which means they are able to make ends meet pretty regularly. This group also is declining as a percentage of the global population, due to birth control practices.

The "hopeful poor" make up 15% of the world's population. These are the people who are just marginally employed, hoping to get into the system, having aspirations for making it into the top 15%. This segment of the population is slowly growing.

The remaining 70% of the global population, the "hopeless poor" and the "isolated villagers" don't have much economic hope. In fact, they are not even connected to the global economic system. That's where most of the population growth is taking place today. I think when we talk about what we're doing in our daily enterprises, we need to consider those people as well as the people who have all the money.

All of these challenges -- ecological, economic, and population -- are related to each other in complex ways. As psychologist John Enright points out, "We can't resolve any of these challenges, we can only resolve all of them; and we can't save ourselves, we can only save everyone" Systems dynamics expert Donella Meadows has provided a good summary. Twenty years ago, she and her colleagues produced a report called The Limits to Growth, which was commissioned by The Club of Rome, a group of futurists. When the book came out, it suggested that within 50 years we would "hit the wall" in relation to a lot of the challenges I summarized above, and that we had better start dealing with those complex interactions right away.

Many people became really upset about that report. There were a lot of criticisms of the statistics. They said "well, it's only a computer simulation, it can't be real." They did everything they could to discount the findings of Donella Meadows and her colleagues. In 1992, for the 20th anniversary, they produced an update. They had a bigger computer and more sophisticated software, so they were able to factor in more variables and have a more accurate simulation. The new book is called Beyond the Limits, because many of the "walls" they predicted we would hit in 50 years, had already been hit! The laws of systems are always operating, whether we understand them or not.

For centuries we tried to fly. Leonardo and others strapped wings on people and had them jump off of buildings flapping their wings. A lot of people perished before the Wright brothers finally

made it! But the laws of aerodynamics were operating all those centuries, weren't they? We just didn't understand them. And there are certainly a lot of laws of systems operating today that we don't yet understand; but like the optimistic frog, we must keep paddling.

So my question in summarizing all of this is "Is it ever appropriate to take a preventive stance towards the consequences of human activity on the planet?" If it is ever appropriate to take that stance, then the next question is "When should that happen?" Today, next week, next year, wait till it gets really bad?

MINDSET AND RESPONSIBILITY - IN SEARCH OF SOMEBODY

All through history, the dominant institution in society has taken responsibility for its sphere of influence. Up until 300 or 400 years ago, the church was the dominant institu- tion, and as Joseph Campbell pointed out, the dominant institution always had the tallest buildings. The church had the tallest buildings, and the church took responsibility for it's whole sphere of influence.

Then with the 17th Century paradigm shift, gradually the state took over. As you will recall, we gave the church the "intangibles" like the human spirit, and the national governments became the dominant institution for everything "real," and took responsibility for their realms of influence. At that point, governments built the tallest buildings.

And now, who has the tallest buildings? Business does. The church took responsibility when it was dominant, the state took responsibility when it was dominant, and now there is nobody really taking responsibility for the whole, which is now the whole ecosystem of the planet. In order to understand what it means to take responsibility, we have to talk about "somebody," as in the somebody at your house who left the lights on, or the somebody who ought to clean out the garage. That's who I'm referring to.

I had a client a number of years ago that asked me to help them with a major planning activity. Within that client system people said all the time "Somebody ought to do something about that". As one example, they had a food service that nobody liked. It would have taken one person to go and talk to the manager about getting some healthier food in the cafeteria, but nobody ever did it. It was always "somebody ought to do something about that lousy food." After a period of working with the top team they all started to recognize that "somebody ought to do something about that," was an element of their culture that they'd like to change.

At the end of the planning activity I took the sheets with the follow up action items and accountabilities down off the wall and asked "Who's going to take these sheets and get them photocopied?" Everyone of the top executives looked down at their shoes, waiting for "somebody" to come into the room. So, I gave the sheets to the CEO, and he took them, and didn't say anything. Of course, nothing ever happened with the planning exercise. I found out later that the CEO was really upset with me for asking him to delegate the getting the notes produced. "Somebody" didn't show up in that case.

Another case about "somebody" showing up has to do with the general manager of a major business unit of a European retail operation. He and his 13 year old daughter were walking

around Brussels one day talking about the future. He asked his daughter "What are you thinking about in terms of a family?" At the time, he was thinking "what am I going to be like as a grandfather?" His daughter stunned him when she said "I'm not going to have any family, because you people have screwed the place up. I'm not going to bring kids into this environment!" That got his attention! In his case, "somebody" woke up, and the way he is now managing his business is entirely different. It's inside us, "somebody" is in each of our hearts, and that's where we have to focus the wake up call!

 I recently told this story in a class I was teaching. One of my students in the course was surprised to find that young people today might not have a very positive outlook on the future, so for his term paper he asked his teenage daughter to invite all of her friends around for an evening. He said "I'll buy all the beer and pizza if you'll talk to me." And they said "Sure, for beer and pizza we'll talk to anybody!"

 So they all showed up and they started talking about the future; and sure enough every kid in the room said "I don't think I want to have a family." He was surprised again. He wrote about this conversation with his daughter's friends for his term paper, suggesting that unless "somebody" comes around pretty soon, there's going to be some pretty major challenges for us to face as a species.

 In order to look further into this "somebody" issue, I want to address mindset as an addiction. That is, if we're going to get to "somebody," we'll have to deal with the addiction to how we currently think. We know what addiction means -- it's a denial, it's an inner emptiness, it's a need that never quite gets filled by whatever we're doing to try and fill it.

  When I speak and write about this area, it feels a little bit like wandering into a bar on a Saturday night, and trying to enroll people into a twelve step program. It's all of us, we're all doing it. But I know from my own struggles with addictions of twenty years ago, that when some of my friends talk to me about it, I said "stop nagging me!" I had to discover inside myself that I wanted to do something about those addictions. And when I did find my own inner commitment, my own inner passion for doing something, then I was able to overcome them.

  But today, I think often we go to the doctor with chest pains and say "fix my chest pains, just take away the pain." Relative to the environment, we say "somebody ought to fix it, but don't make me stop accumulating things."

 First, we have to become aware of what our default mindset is, what the automatic settings in our mindset are, and then we can think about changing. Let me ask you to do something to increase your awareness of mindset defaults. Would you please clap your hands several times? Now clap them together several more times with the other hand on top. How does the second way feel? A little awkward . . . Not quite right . . . Without stopping to think about it, we engage in many predictable patterns of thinking and behaving. Changing any habit is awkward, whether it's a habit of thinking or a habit of doing.

  Once we know what our automatic responses are to a situation, we can change them if we want to. The challenge is to identify what it would take, automatically and without thinking about it, to

think and respond in a new, more desirable, and much more awkward way. We'd have to practice the new behavior or thought pattern a lot, and that takes both commitment and discipline.

Author Marilyn Ferguson sometimes says in her speeches that:

"If we continue to believe as we have always believed, we will continue to act as we have always acted; and that if we continue to act as we have always acted, we will continue to get what we have always gotten."

In a related way, Ronald Laing, the Scottish psychiatrist, once wrote:

The range of what we think and do is limited by what we fail to notice. And because we fail to notice that we fail to notice, there is little we can do to change; until we notice how failing to notice shapes out thoughts and deeds.

I have seen a lot of signs that we are beginning to wake up to the notions expressed by Ferguson and Laing. My own point of view is that the third major human revolution, of the same magnitude as the Agricultural and Industrial Revolutions, will be a revolution of human consciousness.

Let's remind ourselves of come of the common default settings of our present mindsets that are causing this difficult situation. First, nearly everyone thinks most of the time with a short term focus. "I gotta get this done by 10:00, don't bother me!" "We can't worry about the long range plan now, this project is due next week!"

Secondly, most of us most of the time react to externals rather than from our inner creativity. "You make me happy." "I made that mistake because I was upset about what you said." Reflecting on how easy it is to trigger intergroup conflicts, I think it's safe to say that a third default setting most people reflect most of the time is a local perspective rather than a more global one. "We're number one!" "Those people in XXX department just don't understand."

A fourth widely held default is boundary creating and separation thinking. "Yes or No." "Right or Wrong." "Us vs. Them"

Next, most of us seem to operate from a symptom treating mode rather than a preventive one. "We spend all our time at work putting out fires." "Why should I stop smoking, I'm healthy."

And sixth, our prevailing attachment to a materialistic, "having," style of living is perhaps an outgrowth of the above five and is the one that is today causing the greatest threat to this planet of ours. Daniel Quinn, the author who recently published the wonderful novel Ishmael, has suggested that the "master plan" around the world is to go on consuming until there is nothing left to consume! We would be hard pressed to refute this assertion.

There's a story about how Malaysian farmers get rid of monkeys that raid their crops. They found that if they cut a small hole in a coconut and attach it to a tree with some of the monkey's favorite food inside, they can easily capture the monkeys. When the monkeys come to invade the

garden and smell the food, they'll rush over and stick their hand into the coconut to grab the food. They trouble is, they can't get their hands out while they are grasping the food. And because the monkeys won't let go of the prize, it's easy for the farmer to dispatch them.

   I think this is what we as a species are up to in terms of our having-materialistic orientation, (and all the frantic "doing" in order to "have!"). For instance, over the last 20 years, the average person in the U.S. has taken on 160 additional hours of work per year -- roughly an added month! We are also consuming twice as much as per capita we did a couple of decades ago. Are we really twice as happy?

   Research on happiness and fulfillment suggests that 33% of us were relatively happy with our lives in the 1950's, and that the same percentage, 33%, were happy with their lives in 1992. Obviously, happiness has something to do with other factors than all the activity and all the consuming. By the age of 30, the average person in the U.S. has watched a full year of TV commercials. This doesn't even include radio commercials, bill boards, magazines, etc. What are all those commercials telling us? "You don't have enough." "What you have isn't good enough."

 The strongest correlations with happiness and a sense of fulfillment in life are relationships with family and friends, meaningful work, able to use our God given talents, and having a sense of meaning in life. Based on this, I reach the conclusion that the emptiness people feel inside is intangible - nonmaterial, and it therefore can never be filled with tangible things. Satisfaction and fulfillment have little to do with working ever harder in order to have more and more! They have to do with getting excited about some people and getting excited about something that has true meaning for us.

   Peter Russell suggests in his talks on this topic that the surgeon general should put a warning on all advertisements that says "danger - purchasing this product will make you happy for only a short period of time".

   At the root of it we're human beings. We're never going to sustain ourselves with all the increased activity. We're never going to find fulfillment with ever increasing acquisi- tion. It doesn't mean we have to stop and become poverty stricken hermits, but I don't think that the route that we're following is going to lead us where we want to get to.

   Doing and having are reflections of masculine energy. Being and inner meaning are reflections of the feminine and spiritual energies. And if we're spending all that time listening to commercials, how much time are we spending on beingness? I suspect that few of us on the planet are truly balanced in this.

   There is another old testament story that I like a lot, the story of Jacob. Jacob, a grandson of Abraham. You may recall that Jacob had a twin brother, Esau, who was born just ahead of Jacob. The name "Yakov" meant "over reaching", or reaching for too much. Jacob fought with Esau for many years for the birthright of the first born son.

   Then, one night Jacob encountered an angel, and they spent the night in a wrestling match. There were feathers and teeth everywhere the next morning! But really what Jacob was wrestling

with was the outer reality and the inner reality. What he found out was that he had to be a whole person. And as spiritual seekers often do, even to this day, Jacob changed his name in the morning. He changed his name to "Israel."

If we think about the Egyptian influence on the Jewish nation at that point in history, and break Israel down into it's three syllables, I think it's very instructive. IS stands for Isis, the feminine principle, the feminine goddess of the Egyptians. Ra, the sun god, represents the masculine principle. And ELOHAIM was one of the early Hebrew names for God. So what Jacob, then Israel, found out was that to be a full being, we have to balance the masculine, the feminine and the spiritual.

I think that in order to get our fists out of the coconut, we need to do the same kind of thing. This is what I mean by the concept of "mindset versatility." To have versatility in how we think is essential. I want to suggest that we learn to make the default settings -- the short term, reactive, local, boundary creating, symptom creating, and materialistic ways of thinking -- the left ends of dimensions. Then, we can ask questions that take us along these dimensions instead of always focusing on the same response.

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   SHORT TERM . . . . . . . . LONG TERM
REACTIVE . . . . . . . . . . . . CREATIVE
LOCAL . . . . . . . . . . . . GLOBAL
 BOUNDARY CREATING . . . .SYSTEMIC
 SYMPTOM TREATING . . .
                  CAPACITY BUILDING
MATERIALISTIC . . . .. . . SPIRITUAL
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For short term to long term the question is "What's going to happen if this continues?" For Reacting to the externals over to Creating from internals, We can ask "What's an entirely new way to approach this situation that we've never tried before?" To increase versatility on the Local to Global dimension, we can ask "What's the effect on people in the community of this action?"

To promote more Systems Thinking and Less Boundary Creating, we can ask "How do we learn to factor in more distant cause and effect relationships?" To move from Symptom Treating to Capacity Building, we can ask "What can we do to build up our reserves of responsiveness?" And finally, to move from Materialistic to Spiritual beingness, we can learn to ask "What is the larger purpose in that?"

Versatility in our thinking is I think, an interim answer, or at least an interim direction that I want to encourage us to work with. We can all begin asking the questions that will help us be more fluid along these dimensions rather than always responding in the same range of thinking and behavior.

MAKING SUCCESSFUL PATTERN CHANGES

The question remains "How do we successfully make enduring changes in habit patterns? I don't have all the answers, but I've been asking people individually and in groups for some time

to tell me stories of cases in which they have successfully changed a habit pattern. When OD efforts go sour, inevitably, several of these factors are missing! Sometimes I call this work "How do you make changes that stay changed?"

Often when we agree that a change is needed, we'll set out with the new behavior, and then before long something comes along that makes us change back again right away. So the question is how do you make enduring changes? I found that in almost every story, whether it was an individual or a group, there was a passionate commitment, a conviction that it was the right thing to do and that it is possible to do it.

Secondly there have to be some clear goals and first steps. Not all the steps, but some steps. In fact I never heard the word "planning" uttered once in any of the stories. Next, there has to be some kind of discipline or structure or mechanism that requires repetitions. To applaud with our hands the other way around consistently requires practice, and without mechanisms to remind us, its easy to forget to practice.

There needs to be some kind of unconditional support built up, so that the person knows that it's okay to fail, or we know as a group it's okay to fail. As we take two steps ahead and one step back, support is essential.

There also must be integrity in the new behavior. When a change has integrity with a person's values and purpose it makes the change much easier to accomplish. That is, if I can see how a change that is being asked for serves my purpose in life, or is in alignment with some value I hold, it's going to be easier to get that passionate commitment.

Many of the stories had some kind of external wake up call. It's a "yoo - hoo , knock knock , it's time to do something different here, or else." And finally, in a surprisingly high number of cases, there was something to do with intuition, inner knowing, spirit, or faith, (e.g. "I just trusted the process.") that there's something larger than each of us as individuals, that helps us get through the change process.

These are the qualities that I have found most frequently to be present in cases of successful pattern change, and I find them very useful as guidelines for making pattern changes. I make them available whenever I'm helping a group or an individual go through a change process to make sure that at least these qualities are present.

WHAT IS OUR CONTRIBUTION?

There are a number of skills and approaches that we presently use that I think are going to be very important in the future which we can choose to make available.

One is our natural ability at networking and forming alliances. I think that the early work in establishing a sustainable future is going to happen in alliances across boundaries and not within boundaries. The more we can build networks and alliances on a community wide basis, the faster we are going to have an effect.

Also regarding networks, I would like to issue a challenge to the regional networks of the OD network. I think historically we have taken our networks, for the most part, (both the national and the regionals) as a place where we go and get things for ourselves and then go home. I propose that we turn the tables on that and suggest that the regionals become more proactive and create programs that can be taken out to the people in the community. For example, we could easily sponsor dialogue programs for managers in the community. There are a number of things that might be done at the regional level to begin dialogues and explorations that focus on raising the questions that need to be raised.

Regional groups could also form alliances with other regional associations and identify benchmark programs and activities. The more we can communicate and share successes in this new area of questioning, the faster it's going to help build up the momentum.

I think that diversity is absolutely essential, and we've already got a good start on this. I don't think that men have the answer, I don't think women have the answer, I don't think Caucasians have the answer, I don't think that any particular group has the answer. I think what we need to do is increase by many magnitudes what we're already doing with diversity, and to do it on a much more global basis.

We already know a lot of technologies for working on the inner, being level, and I would encourage us to keep doing this to foster a greater balance of masculine, feminine and spiritual energies.

There's going to be a lot of conflict in the future, and I'd like us to make our conflict skills available. It's clear that as the pressure builds, people move to more extreme outlooks. Some become more fundamental and others, more liberal. As we move into more extreme positions, it becomes more difficult to maintain the dialogue, and to maintain the heart connection, that's going to be needed for us to get through the chaos that we will soon be experiencing.

We will also need to be very creative. As William Miller says, "The only way to find the limits of an innovative idea is to get beyond them". How do we get absurd enough to get beyond what is absolutely impossible in order to find out where that limit is.

Integrity and purposefulness will be essential, as well. We may be able to create almost anything we can dream of with our technical capabilities, but do we temper our creations with a sense of moral purpose? There needs to be a huge amount of integrity in the work we do, I think, to be successful in fostering a sustainable future.

There are a number of other areas that organization development practitioners could easily move into -- and many already have -- to foster a sustainable future. OD started as a very eclectic profession. We were a mixture of all sorts of things, and most universities who had organization behavior programs in the 60's didn't know where to put them. There were often attempts to get rid of them because they were too radical and too eclectic. I think we need to return to that spirit of eclecticism and bring in economics, political science, policy science, population studies, and so on and so forth. We must begin talking to other professions on a regular basis about how do we together begin addressing the situations that we together have created.

Scenario building will also be highly important. These activities help to foster versatility and strategic, longer range thinking. Whether or not the scenarios are accurate is less important than learning to think in more versatile ways about the future.

We still have a long way to go in change leadership and learning to adjust to change continuously. It has become very clear that continuous, unpredictable change will be the norm for the foreseeable future. How do we learn to surf on the waves of change?

I think bench marking studies and self auditing processes are going to be very important. Those companies that have made a commitment to sustainability and have been restructuring how they operate around some of these principles are finding that it does affect the bottom line in a very positive way. So at least in the short term, the financial results are enhanced by becoming more "green." We can do a lot to help with that.

Dialogues we already know how to do. It's a very important technology that we need to be using, because in the absence of having any right answers, it's the question that we need to live in.

Stakeholders councils are another area we must learn to promote and work with. Stakeholders meeting as focus groups can help our businesses decide how to operate.

Finally, we can also help our businesses in the manufacturing industries especially to take full life cycle responsibility for their products, from the time the materials come out of the ground to the time it ends up in a landfill. Many companies are now doing this, and I think it's an important step in the right direction.

LIVING IN THE QUESTION

During my keynote event at the National meeting last October, I asked the audience to reflect on the questions that we should be focusing on right now -- both as individuals and as a profession. After sharing these at their tables, a few people had an opportunity to share their questions with everyone in the room. The following questions were shared.

1. How can we fully experience the depths of the dilemmas built into these realities, without going into major depression or going numb, and doing something else like turning on the TV? How do we redefine the very meaning of the work that we do so that it goes beyond the organizational framework that keeps us in the narrow focus in order to create settings in which our clients make it through this barrier of mindset?

2. I'm involved in a child care center, and the teachers are telling me that there's very little left of the parents when they come home from work. And also that the children themselves are becoming more bizarre and erratic in their behavior. My questions are really twofold: 1. how do we as a society reconnect with these children; and 2. once we grasp the fact that these children will be here 30 years from now, what can we do to make a difference now?

3. I have a question about the 70% described as "the hopelessly poor." It seemed to be assumed that if they weren't in the global economy, they were hopelessly poor. I wonder if that's a valid assumption? And I wonder if there's a cultural blindness about the industrial paradigm, as telling people how they should live. If we look at this assumption and determine that it is not valid, then maybe we ought to get out of the industrial paradigm, and away from the market economy.

4. We dealt with two questions at our table. First, if all of our clients achieved all their objective, would these kids get the world they want? And second, does organization development hold too small a focus to meet the challenge?

5. The question on my mind is who do I partner with each hour, each day, each year Who do I come into relationship with, thinking of long term partnerships. If I'm speaking can I think of children as my partners in a presentation. If I am going to a restaurant, can I seek out places where different kinds of partners or potential partners might appear, so that I begin to understand that I too lead a homogeneous existence relative to what's possible? Then I can diversify it anytime I choose to.

6. If we were working from a global consciousness, what is the work that we would be doing?

7. Am I willing to take personal responsibility for the transformation of our planet?

8. If we consider ourselves to be experts in process, why aren't we developing processes to assist people in getting in touch with this information without guilt.

9. What do I want the world to be? How do I align myself with what we, as a global community, want the world to be? And how do I walk the talk as we move along the path of our lives? For the profession, what do we want the world to be? How do we align ourselves? And how do we walk the talk? The critical question for me is how do we in fact become a community that models the way in which we would like to see other people be?

10. How can we involve children more in our work in the visioning process, and in the planning, and in the work that needs to be done?

11. We were discussing Al Gore and his riding to an environmental event in Tennessee, and wanting to arrive comfortable in his air conditioned car so he wouldn't look really messy, and what came up for us was the issue of balance. The taking care of self and the taking care of the environment. How do we justify taking care of ourselves and those in our immediate world? Is that really making a difference in some way? What happens to the world out there while we do it?

12. How much are we willing to change our lifestyles so that we can live sustainably ? Can OD professionals serve as models for others?

13. Am I doing the right things today, personally and professionally, to support a sustainable future? What can we do as a profession to spread our work around the globe and expand the size of the whole?

14. We had the question of whether it is ethical for us as OD professionals to help our clients achieve their objectives of productivity and growth when we know as we do now that those objectives may be destroying the planet?

15. What would have happened today at this brunch if we had each brought in a homeless person to eat our meal? What would happen if we brought in a homeless person to eat our dinner at the gala tonight?

16. Can we identify some OD practitioners who are doing good work towards the directions we have identified and can we benchmark against those projects?

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