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**ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT WITHIN
THE FIRM: A SURVEY OF THE 500
LARGEST INDUSTRIALS**

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<p style="text-align: center;">ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE FIRM: A SURVEY OF THE 500 LARGEST INDUSTRIALS</p>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 500 largest industrial firms in the United States were surveyed with regard to their internal Organization Development (OD) practice. Prior to this research only a handful of studies have explored the world of internal OD activities. Thus, a basic premise underlying the survey research presented here is that it would be valuable to begin to develop a data base regarding the internal practice of OD.

The sample for this survey consisted of the 500 largest industrial firms as defined by the 1990 Fortune 500 listing. The survey was mailed to the executive in charge of human resources at each of the 500 firms. The survey instrument was constructed by the authors with the assistance of a fifteen member expert panel consisting of HR professionals, external OD consultants, internal OD professionals, and academic researchers who have made distinguished contributions to the field of organizational change and development. Completed questionnaires were received from 22 percent of the Fortune 500.

Based on these results, the internal practice of OD as represented by 110 large industrials can be described as an activity at the corporate level of the organization which is located in the Human Resource area. Typically, the director or manager of corporate OD reports directly to the Vice-President of Human Resources. The lead OD professional, who operates in a dual role of supervisor and active consultant, has a relatively small staff of less than 10 full-time consultants or professionals. The ideal OD consultant/professional would have an advanced degree in addition to significant consulting and/or business experience. The formal education of the ideal OD professional would be in disciplines such as organizational behavior, organizational development, or industrial/organizational psychology.

The internal OD function generally provides 74 percent of all OD services to the organization. External consultants are used for the remaining 26 percent of OD services. The external professional provides a range of services from one-shot interventions to complex system-wide change processes which are beyond the expertise (or time) of the internal group.

These firms described 34.5 percent of their OD services as human processual interventions. The remaining OD activities and services provided include system-wide interventions (28.7%), technostructural interventions (16.9%), and strategic planning interventions (15.7%).

The internal practice of OD is further characterized by a lack of involvement in operations outside of the United States and Canada. Although approximately 80 percent of the 110 large industrials had facilities outside of the U.S. and Canada, only 43 percent of internal OD functions provide services to international operations.

A content analysis of critical issues facing the internal practice of OD yielded seven clear items that deserve research attention. These critical issues include managing change (speed, complexity and acceptance), culture and diversity, outcome measurement, strategy and planning, leadership development, work group development, and quality improvement. On balance, the state of internal OD practice seems to be reasonably effective and well established in these 110 large industrial organizations. Over 80 percent of the responding firms classified their internal OD function as being an effective contributor to their respective organization. Therefore, the practice of OD inside these large industrials is alive and well and worthy of further exploration.

**ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE FIRM:
A SURVEY OF THE 500 LARGEST INDUSTRIALS**

The purpose of this report is to summarize data gathered from a survey of the Fortune 500 industrials with regard to the practice of organization development within their firms. We begin by presenting some rationale for conducting the survey. This is followed by a description of the survey methodology, results, and some discussion.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

There are two major categories that define the practice of OD. First, the external practice is lead by a consultant outside the client organization. Typically, external consultants are entrepreneurs of OD services and operate from a contract to provide a specific intervention or change program. Second, the internal practice of OD is lead by a change agent inside, and under the employ of, the client organization. While this role dichotomy is frequently addressed in the literature of the field (e.g. Burke, 1982; Case, Vandenberg, & Meredith, 1990; Cummings & Huse, 1989), on balance we probably know more about the activities of external change agents than we do about the activities of internal OD professionals. Upon reflection, this is not surprising since much of the literature (certainly not all) is written by external consultants, academically based researchers, and others that are not directly employed by client organizations. The public availability of information is constrained also by the reality that organizations understandably regard some internal change programs and their results as proprietary information (Woodman, 1989a).

Only a handful of studies have explored the world of internal change agents. Case et al. (1990) included 50 internal change agents in a survey that examined differences in values and intervention use between external and internal change agents. Browne, Cotton, and Golembiewski (1977) obtained data from 246 internal OD practitioners for a study of marginality in the change agent role. Some of the 65 OD experts used by Shepard and Raia

(1981) as a Delphi panel to predict the future of the OD profession were internal practitioners. Most recently, Fagenson and Burke (1990) reported on the predictions of OD practitioners. A sample of primarily internal practitioners generated lists of activities they thought they would engage in at the turn of the century. While other examples could be cited, respondents to survey research published in the change and development area seem more likely to be external rather than internal OD practitioners. In addition, scholarly reviews of the field (e.g., Beer & Walton, 1987; Sashkin & Burke, 1987; Woodman, 1989b) that serve to identify cutting edge issues, document developments in theory and practice, and summarize empirical research, may well have an "external practice bias." That is, typically neither the review authors nor the researchers and consultants whose change efforts are reviewed are internal practitioners. Even collections of writings devoted to OD practice (as opposed to theory and research) seem to be heavily biased toward the external perspective. For example, a recent book on OD practice published by NTL (Sikes, Drexler, & Gant, 1989) contains contributions from some 36 authors. A perusal of the biographical sketches included in the volume reveals that only a single one of these individuals is an internal OD professional. The other 35 are external consultants and professors. Similarly, Volume 3 of the Organization Development Annual (Jackson & Manning, 1990), devoted to an exploration of organizational diagnosis, includes work by only three internal OD professionals among the 14 authors contributing to the book.

Thus, a basic premise underlying the survey research reported here is that it would be valuable to begin to develop a data base regarding the internal practice of OD. The authors have experience in both the internal and external practice role, yet (like everyone else in the field) each of us can only work with, or for, a limited number of organizations. How much of our experience base is generalizable to other organizations? What are firms currently doing when they think they are doing OD? Does the literature, which would seem to provide an external practice lens through which to view the field, accurately portray the

internal practice of OD? These are the types of questions which prompted us to survey the Fortune 500 with regard to their OD activities.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample for this survey consisted of the 500 largest industrial firms as defined by the 1990 Fortune 500 listing (Fortune, 1990). The survey was mailed to the executive in charge of human resources at each of the 500 firms. 449 HR executives were identified by name using the Dun & Bradstreet Million Dollar Directory (1990) and the Standard & Poor's Register of Corporations, Directors and Executives (1990). Surveys mailed to the remaining 51 firms were addressed to the "Executive in Charge of Human Resources." **Procedure**

A three-step procedure was used to conduct this survey research. First, surveys were mailed to the 500 firms identified as the sample. Three weeks after the initial mailing, reminder postcards were mailed to all firms who had not returned their completed questionnaire. Thirty days after the reminder cards were mailed, a second mailing of the questionnaire was sent to those firms who had not previously responded to either the first mailing or the reminder card.

Measures

An early goal of this survey research project was to construct a questionnaire that would be short and relatively easy for the busy HR/OD executive to complete, while at the same time be rich enough for descriptive research purposes. To assist the authors in achieving this goal, a pilot panel of experts was assembled to provide guidance in the construction of the survey instrument. The fifteen member pilot panel consisted of HR professionals, external OD consultants, internal OD professionals, and academic researchers who have made distinguished contributions to the field of organizational change and development. Each pilot panel member provided detailed feedback on the "draft"

questionnaire the authors provided. Based on this feedback, the final survey instrument was developed. The instrument was a 15-item questionnaire that was a mix of short answer, "check mark," and open-ended questions. A copy of the questionnaire can be obtained from the first author.

RESULTS

Responses to the survey were received from 147 organizations representing 29.4 percent of the 500 largest industrial firms. Of this number, 15 organizations did not have a corporate OD function, 22 had a policy against participating in survey research, and 110 firms (22%) provided completed questionnaires.

It is important to note that while the respondents to this survey may not necessarily be representative of the 500 largest industrial firms, nevertheless their responses do represent a summary of the OD activities of 110 of the largest industrial organizations.

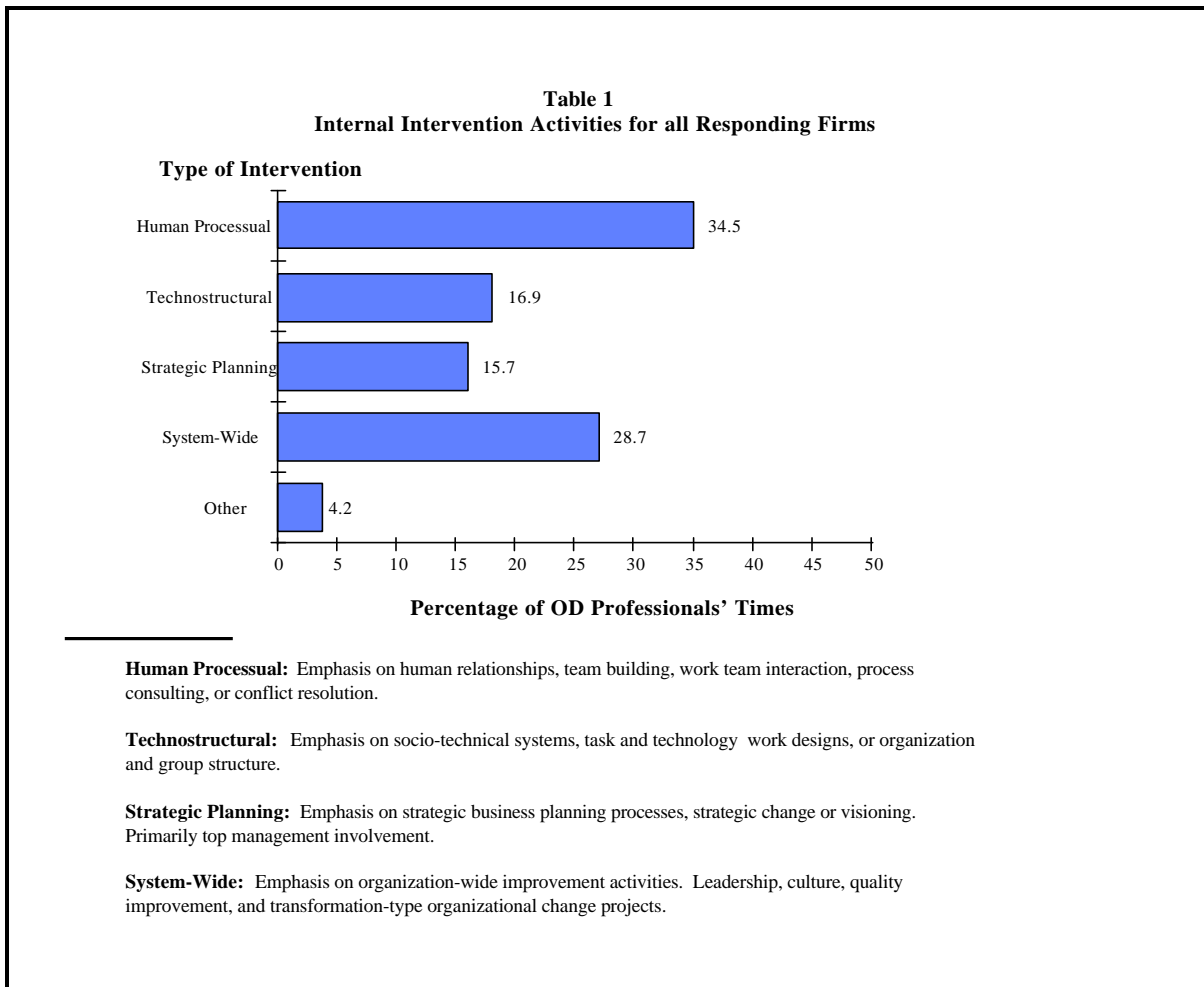
Of the 110 completed questionnaires, 96 firms identified themselves by requesting a copy of the survey results. Among the 96 firms which identified themselves, 42 were from the largest 100 firms, 19 were from the second ranked 100, and 8, 16, and 11 were from the third, fourth, and fifth hundred, respectively. Thus, the responding firms include at least 42 percent of the largest 100 and 61 of the largest 200 industrials or 30 percent of these top 200 firms. There seemed to be a somewhat greater interest in responding among larger organizations.

Item Responses

The first question in the survey dealt with the percentage of time dedicated to various intervention activities (see Table 1). The respondents were asked to split 100 percent of their OD professionals' time into four defined categories: Human Processual, Technostructural, Strategic Planning, and System-Wide interventions. Respondents were also given the opportunity to answer "Other" and describe these other interventions. Only 4.2 percent of the total time distributed by the respondents utilized the "Other" category. Thus,

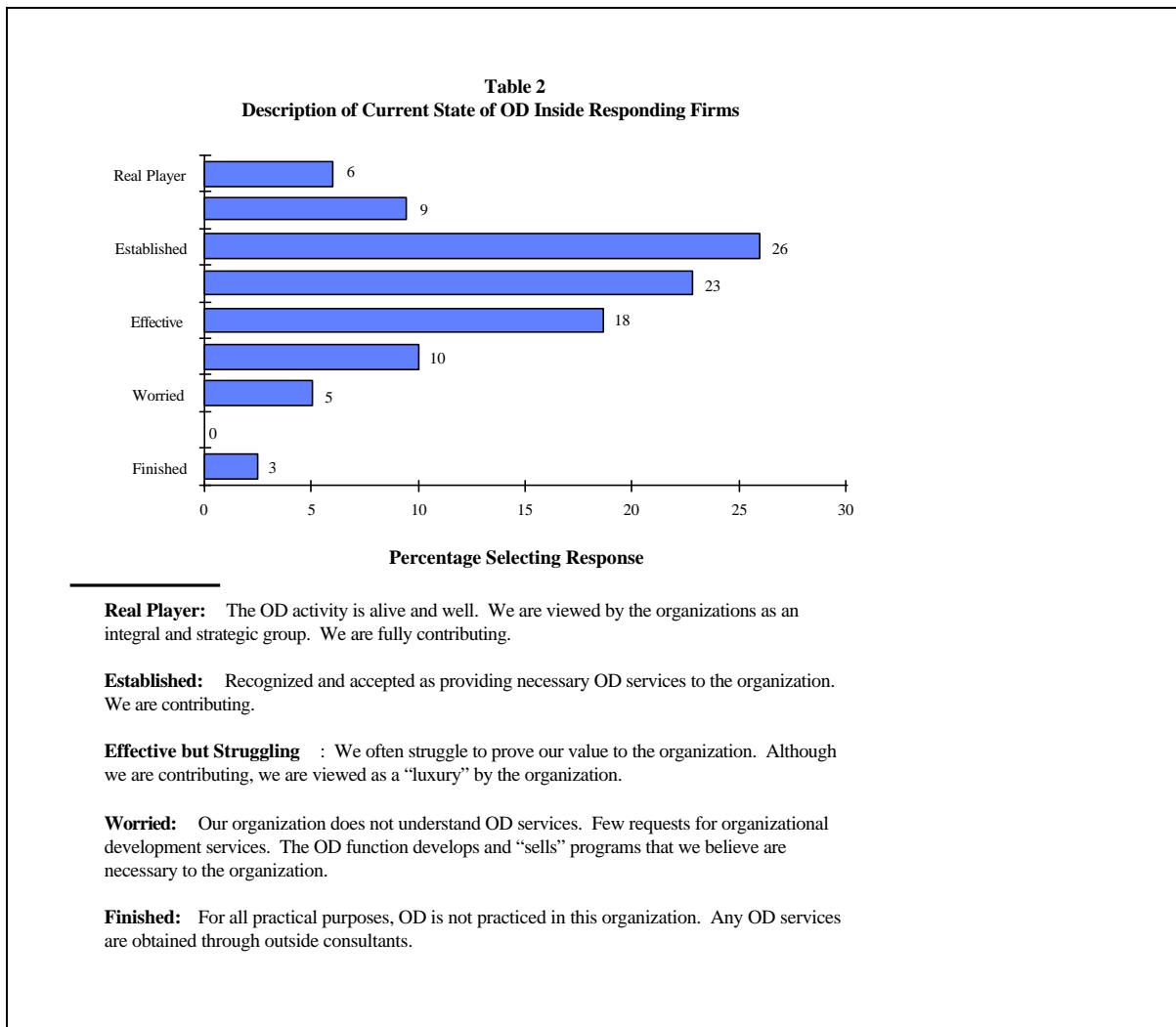
the categorization scheme used to identify the firms' OD activities seemed to make sense to most respondents.

It is important to note that Table 1 reports averages that summarize the OD activities for the 107 respondents answering the question. However, there is considerable variance across individual firms. For example, four firms reported that 100 percent of their time was devoted to human processual interventions while three firms reported no time spent on human processual interventions. Similar statements could be made for each intervention category.

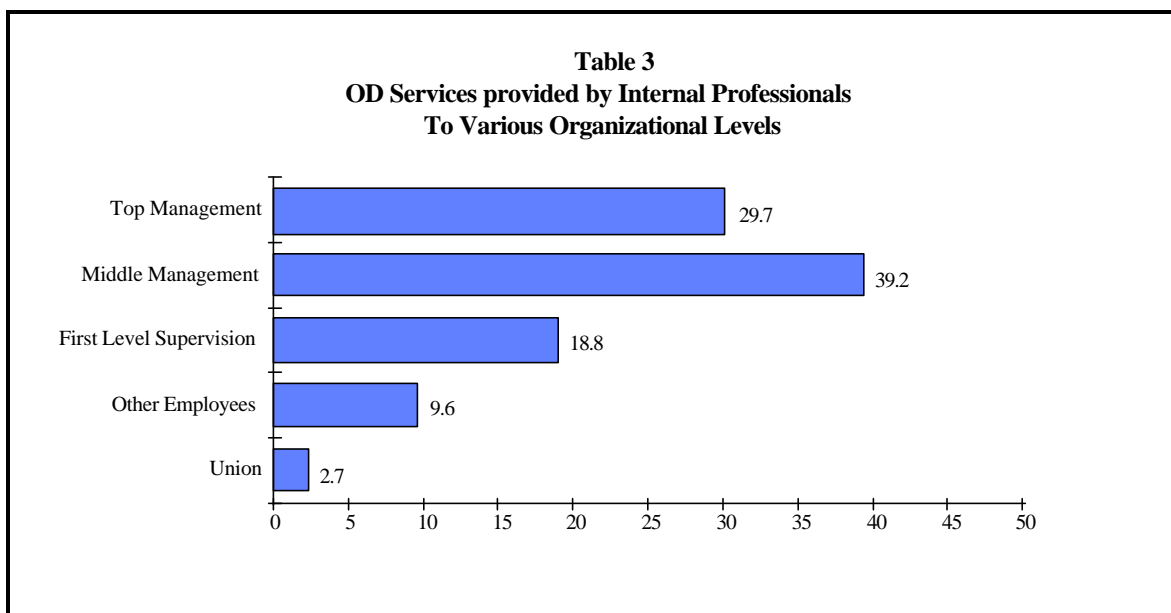


The second question in the survey asked the respondent to place an "X" on a continuum at the point that best describes the current state of OD activities in their organization. The continuum was a nine point scale which ranged from "Real Player" (the OD activity is alive and well and is considered to be an integral and strategic entity.) to "Finished" (OD, for all practical purposes, is not practiced in this organization.).

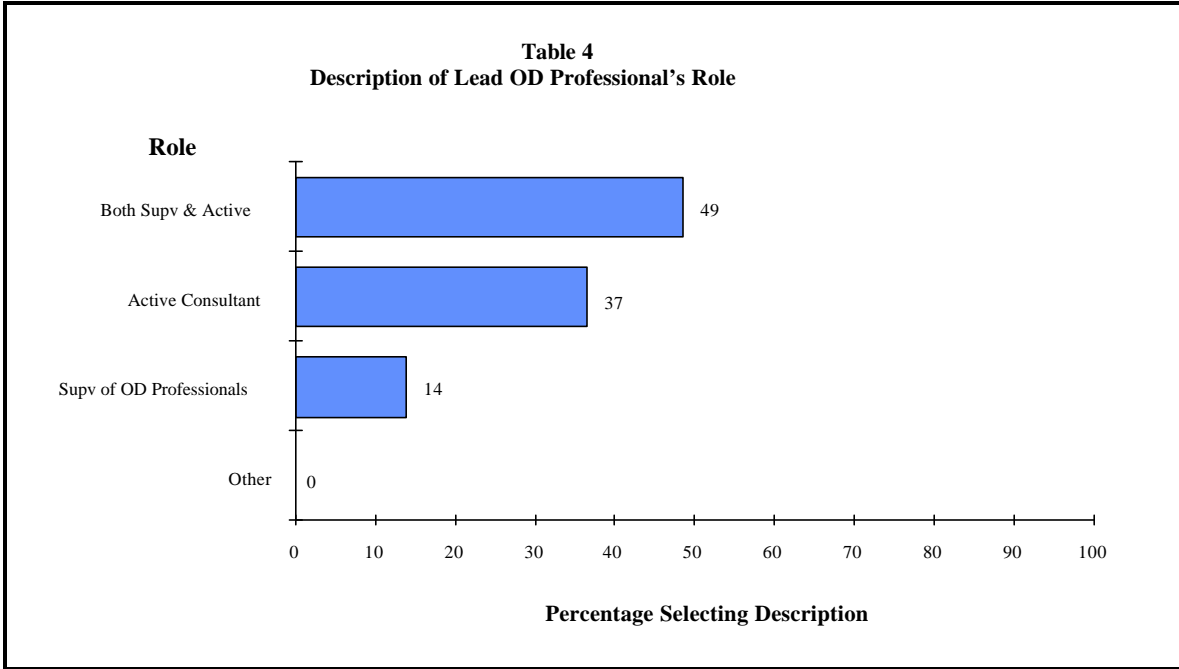
The modal response to this question was "Established," with 26 percent of the respondents ranging between "Real Player" and "Effective but Struggling." Only 3 percent of all respondents stated that OD was "Finished" in their organizations. Table 2 provides the percentage of respondents that selected each point on the continuum.



The third question involved the percentage of OD services that occur at different levels of the organization (see Table 3). According to the 105 respondents to this question, 29.7 percent of OD services are provided to top management, 39.2 percent of services are provided to middle management, and 18.8 percent, 9.6 percent, and 2.7 percent of services were provided to first line supervision, other employees, and union employees, respectively. An interesting finding is that almost 69 percent of all OD services provided by the survey respondents were to top and middle level management.

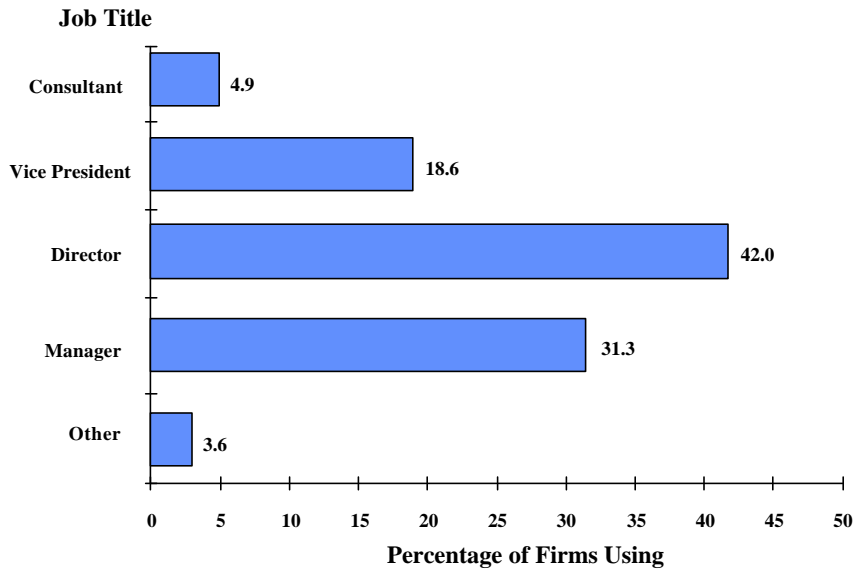


Question four asked about the role of the lead OD professional inside the organization. Specifically, the question addressed what role best describes the lead OD professional a) supervisor of OD professionals, b) an active consultant providing direct client services, or c) both, a supervisor and active consultant. As shown in Table 4, of the 106 respondents to this question 49 percent of lead OD professionals operate as both a supervisor and active consultant, 37 percent are defined best as an active consultant, and 14 percent are best defined as a supervisor of OD professionals.



Question five asked for the job title of the lead OD professional (see Table 5). The respondents included a wide variety of titles which the authors collapsed into consultant, director, manager, and vice-president. Of the 102 firms responding to this question, 42 percent of the lead OD professionals were in director positions, 31.3 percent were in manager positions, 18.6 percent were identified as vice-president positions, and only 4.9 percent were in consultant positions. Only 3.6 percent of respondents provided titles that did not fit into these four categories. Contrasting question five with question four, it is interesting to note that while 37 percent of the OD professionals defined their role as primarily "active consultant," only about 5 percent carry this job title.

Table 5
Job Title of Lead OD Professional



Job Title:

Vice President: e.g. Vice President, Personnel Administration Vice President, Human Resources Vice President, Resource Development.

Director: e.g. Human Resources Director, Director of Staffing & Organization Development, Director of Employee Relations, Director of Professional Development, Director of Training & Development.

Manager: e.g. Division Manager, Manager of Organization Development, Manager of Organization Effectiveness, Manager of Resource Development, General Manager of Training and Development.

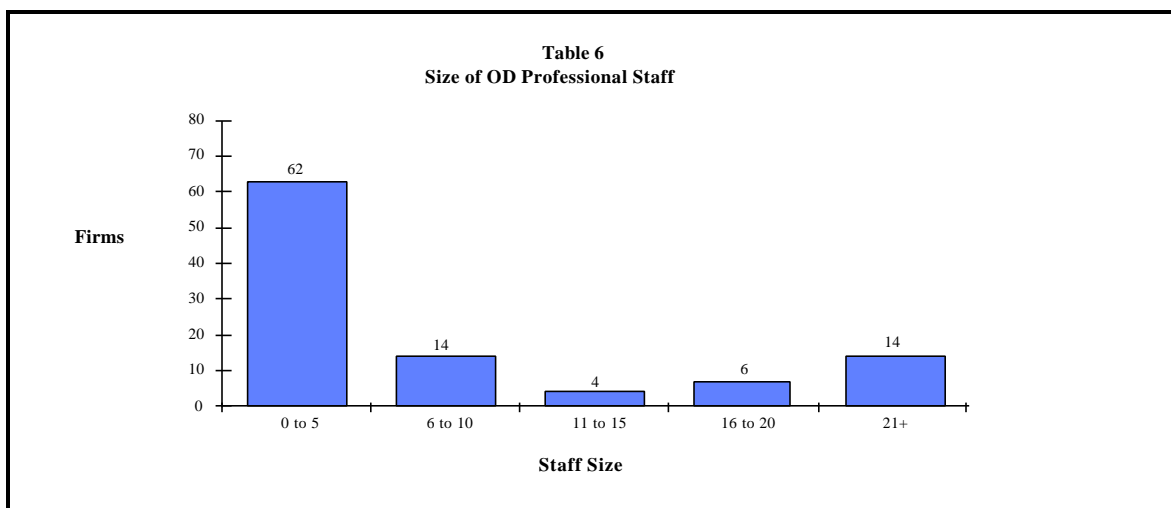
Other than those listed above

Question six concerned the department or staff area to which the OD activities reported. Of the 110 firms responding to this question, 68 percent specified that OD activities reported to the human resources area. Some of the other departments or functions mentioned included employee relations, administration and development, and industrial relations. Note that these are department or area names used by the respondents. Broadly

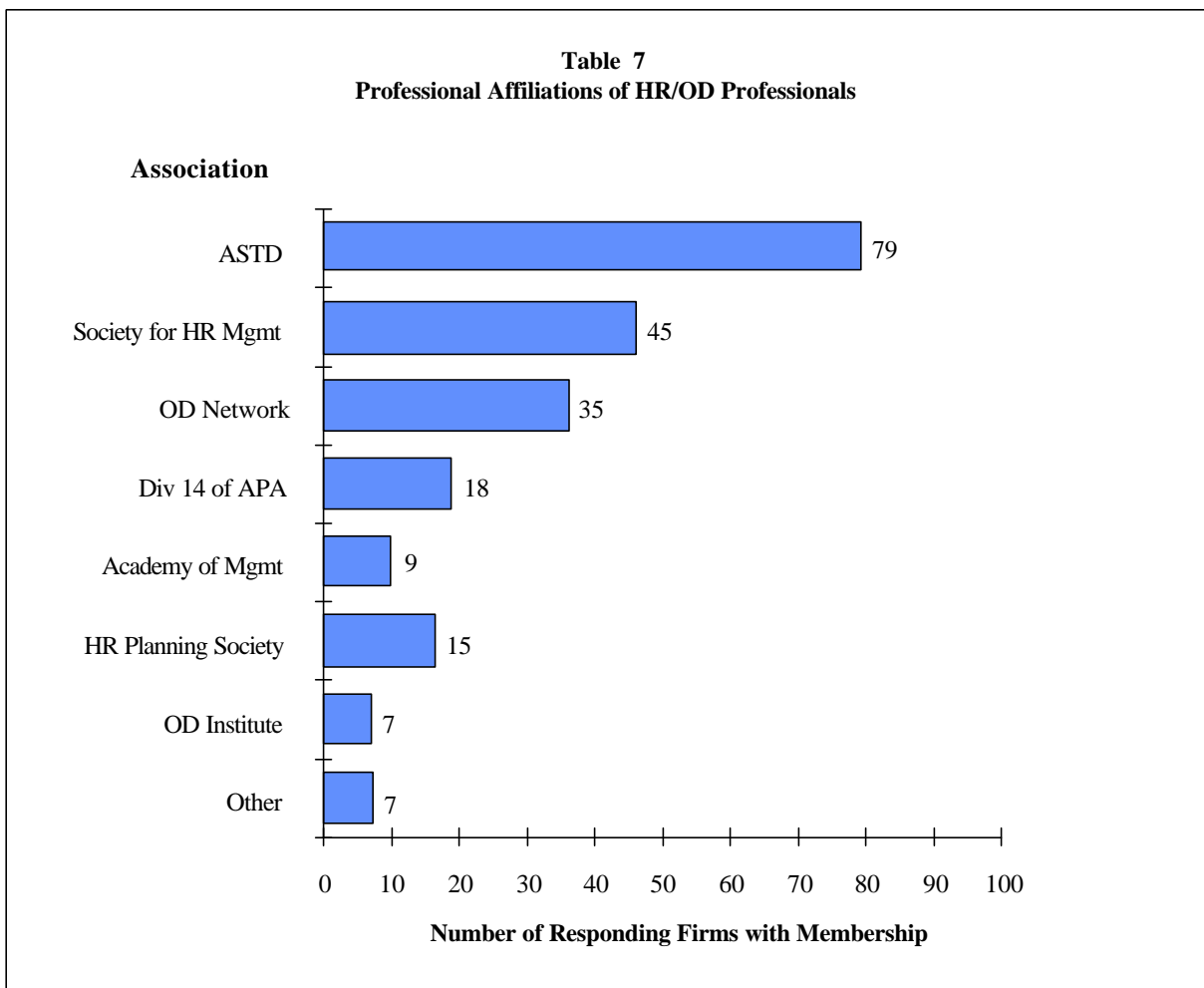
defined, the human resources function would encompass almost all of the responses to this question. This seems consistent with conventional wisdom with regard to the locus of OD professionals within the firm (e.g. Cummings & Huse, 1989, p. 25).

Question seven asked for the title of the position to which the lead OD professional reports. Of the 102 responses to this question, 64 percent report to the Vice-President of Human Resources. Most of the other responses were either VP's, managers, or directors of employee relations, administration and development, or industrial relations. An interesting note is that 10.7 percent of the respondents report directly to either the CEO or President of the firm.

Question eight specifically asked respondents to provide the number of full-time equivalent employees devoted to professional OD activities (see Table 6). The answers ranged from 1 employee to 100 employees, with an average OD staff of 8.5 professionals. Of the 101 firms responding to this question, 76 percent of all firms have an OD staff size of 1-10 employees, 10 percent have an OD staff size of 11-20 professionals, while 14 percent have OD staffs of more than 20 professionals.



Question nine referred to the involvement of the HR/OD professional in outside professional organizations (see Table 7). Of the 110 responses to this question, the American Society of Training and Development was the leading organization with membership reported by 79 respondents. ASTD was followed by the Society of Human Resource Management (45), OD Network (35), Division 14 of the American Psychological Association - Society for Industrial/Organizational Psychology (18), Human Resource Planning Society (15), the Academy of Management (9), and the Organization Development Institute (7). It should be noted that the Human Resource Planning Society was not listed in our major categories. HRPS membership was provided by the respondents through the n Other n category.

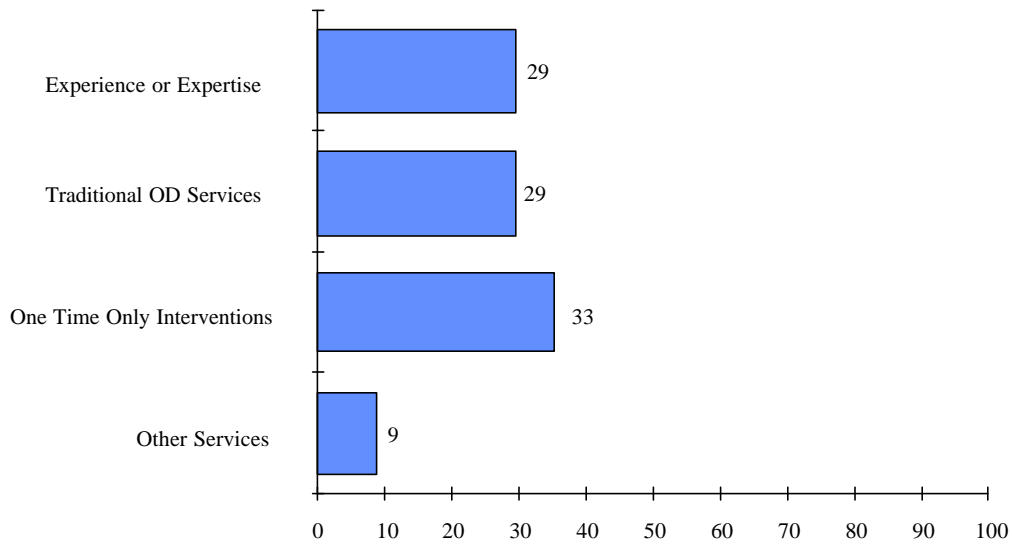


Questions ten and eleven were concerned with the use of external or outside OD consultant services. Summarizing 109 responses to this question, these firms receive 25.8 percent of their OD services from outside consultants. The type of services most likely to be provided by outside consultants is evenly distributed among a) those traditional OD services that the internal OD staff does not have the resources or time to provide (29%), b) one time only interventions or training sessions (33%), and c) interventions that require the experience or expertise that the internal function cannot provide (29%). Only 9 percent of those responding indicated "Other" types of services provided by external consultants.

Question twelve was concerned with the international dimension of OD services. The respondents were asked if there was an active OD effort outside of the U.S. and Canada. Of the 110 responses to this question, 87 firms had operations outside of the U.S. and Canada. However, only 43 percent of those organizations with international operations have an OD effort outside of the U.S. and Canada.

Question thirteen was intended to capture the most important world-wide issues facing internal OD functions. The emphasis was on international concerns. There were 74 responses to this item. A major concern in the international arena was resources. By resources, the respondents described a) the cost of providing OD to smaller international operations, b) the limited supply of qualified OD professionals who understand the different societal and business cultures, and c) the commitment of money and staff by top management to the international operations. One respondent stated that the international organizations are, developmentally, at least five years behind their U.S. operations and therefore the acceptance of and need for international OD efforts will lag behind.

Table 8
Uses of External Consultants to Provide OD Services



Question fourteen asked the organizations to list the most critical issues that deserve research attention in the field of organization development. A content analysis of the 101 responses to this question revealed seven key issue areas that seemed of predominant concern in these firms (see Table 9). The first issue of concern was change itself. A variety of secondary issues including managing change in a complex environment, middle management resistance to change, and large scale change efforts, help to define the change concerns of the responding organizations. The second critical issue involved culture and diversity issues. Concerns such as how to merge cultures successfully, developing interventions that influence the corporate culture, and acceptance of women and minorities in senior positions characterize this issue. The third major issue, outcome measurement, was

defined by return on investment (ROI) of OD interventions, the connection of OD and the bottom line, and the reliability and validity of various change interventions.

TABLE 9
Most Critical Internal OD Research Issues Identified By Responding Firms

CRITICAL ISSUE	EXAMPLES OF RESPONDENTS' COMMENTS
Credibility of OD	"managing and leading rapid change in a complex environment"
	"methods to manage complex issues"
	"middle management acceptance of change"
Culture & Diversity	"managing culture change in an organization"
	"how to merge cultures successfully"
	"cultural diversity"
	"workforce diversity"
Outcome Measurement	"effectiveness of various interventions"
	"ROI on OD services"
	"Value-added measurement of OD services"
Strategy & Planning	"linking business strategies with HR activities"
	"integrating OD with strategic plan of the organization"
	"OD planning for world wide implementation"
Leadership Development	"transformational leadership"
	"how changes in leadership style impact an organization"
	"willingness of upper management to confront change issues"
Work Group Development	"team management effectiveness"
	"self-directed work groups"
	"how far should 'autonomous' teams and self-management go?"
Quality	"concepts of quality in staff functions"
	"quality improvement is the most critical issue in the U.S. today"
	"marrying high performance work systems with quality and organization design technology"

The remaining four issues involved strategic planning (linking OD to overall business strategy), leadership and management development (role of managers in change efforts), work group and team issues (team management effectiveness), and finally, quality issues (quality improvement of work). Overall, there were 212 issues listed by the responding firms. The seven categories discussed above represented approximately 44 percent of the responses, so there is clearly a rich, diversified set of concerns in the remaining data.

Question fifteen asked the executives to describe the educational and work experience background that is most essential for success as an OD professional in their organizations. With regard to education, 15 percent preferred a Ph.D., 30 percent preferred at least an advanced or master's degree and 25 percent required a bachelor's degree. The remaining 30 percent of respondents indicated education and training needs without mentioning formal, higher education requirements. However, it should be noted that most of the abilities discussed as needs by these firms would warrant, at minimum, the attainment of a bachelor's degree.

Organizations who preferred the Ph.D. were specific with regard to the area of study. In most cases the organization wanted the Ph.D. in organizational behavior or industrial/organizational psychology. The organizations who required at least a master's level degree were broader in their preferred areas of study. The responses ranged from a master of business administration (M.B.A.) to a master of arts degree (M.A.). There was particular emphasis on advanced study in human resource management (HRM). Finally, those respondents preferring at least a bachelor's degree were less specific in their choice of major areas of study. The responses were primarily undergraduate degrees in business administration or the social sciences.

From a work experience perspective, the responding organizations identified three primary areas of preference a) OD/consulting, b) human resources/training, and c) line experience in the organization. The respondents emphasized the preference for 5-10 years of work experience. The need and ability to interact with top management was heavily stressed.

There was a strong emphasis placed on human resource generalist/specialist experience. One respondent stated the internal OD professional has to possess "effective communication skills, be very smart, and be particularly savvy."

DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

By way of summary we will describe a typical or "modal" OD operation in these firms and provide a few additional observations.

Based on these results, the internal practice of OD as represented by 110 large industrials can be described as an activity at the corporate level of the organization which is located in the Human Resource area. Typically, the director or manager of corporate OD reports directly to the Vice-President of Human Resources. The lead OD professional, who operates in a dual role of supervisor and active consultant, has a relatively small staff of less than 10 full-time consultants or professionals. The ideal OD consultant/professional would have an advanced degree in addition to significant consulting and/or business experience. The formal education of the ideal OD professional would be in disciplines such as organizational behavior, organizational development, or industrial/organizational psychology.

The internal OD function generally provides 74 percent of all OD services to the organization. External consultants are used for the remaining 26 percent of OD services. The external professional provides a range of services from one-shot interventions to complex system-wide change processes which are beyond the expertise (or time) of the internal group.

Respondents described the internal practice of OD as follows: 34.5 percent of their OD services are human processual interventions, 28.7 percent are system-wide interventions, 16.9 percent are technostructural interventions, and 15.7 percent are strategic planning interventions. It is interesting to contrast these results with a similar classification

reported by Golembiewski, Proell, and Sink (1982). Their categorization of OD interventions produced the following figures: Public sector - 73 percent human processual, 11 percent system-wide, 16 percent technostructural; Private sector - 61 percent human processual, 11 percent system-wide, and 28 percent technostructural. Differences that limit comparison here include time of the study and an absence of the strategic planning category in the Golembiewski et al. study. However, some differences in results might be attributable to internal versus external OD practice. Golembiewski et al. (1982) analyzed 574 cases of OD interventions which, it would have to be assumed, include both internal and external OD practitioners as change agents. However, as argued earlier, it would be surprising if these interventions are not heavily biased toward reports of external practice.

Another way to analyze these intervention results would be to collapse these four categories into individual/group level interventions and whole system/organization level interventions. Thus, individual/group level interventions would be the sum of the human processual and technostructural categories (51.4%) and the whole system/organization level interventions would be comprised of the strategic planning and system-wide interventions (44.4%). By looking at the data this way, there still seems to be a significant amount of time dedicated to individual and group level interventions in what could be called traditional OD activities. Woodman (1989b) argued that the field was shifting to a greater emphasis on changing whole systems. His conclusion might be a bit premature, at least in terms of the internal practice of OD. On the other hand, note that these firms report considerably more system-wide activity than was reported in the earlier Golembiewski et al. (1982) study (28.7% versus 11%).

The internal practice of OD is further characterized by a lack of involvement in operations outside of the United States and Canada. Although approximately 80 percent of the 110 large industrials had facilities outside of the U S and Canada, only 43 percent of internal OD functions provide services to international operations.

Finally, perhaps the data from Table 2 provide a fitting closing comment. On balance, the state of internal OD practice seems to be reasonably effective and well established in these 110 large industrial organizations. In most of these firms OD is perceived as a viable entity. We must be careful not to overgeneralize these conclusions to all industrials or even to the Fortune 500. For example, we would expect the percentage of Fortune 500 firms where OD is in serious trouble to be underrepresented in our sample. On the other hand, surveying the Fortune 500 is a tricky business (Gaedeke & Tootelian, 1976). This survey went "cold" to these firms; that is, it had no sponsorship that could be used to encourage these firms to participate. Despite this, 110 organizations took the time to provide this important glimpse into the practice of OD within their firms. This suggests, at the very least, that issues of organizational change and the OD activities undertaken to address these change issues are important to a significant number of the largest industrial firms.

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