

A NEW VIEW OF ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE COMPETENCIES: The Engage and Learn Model

Christopher G. Worley and Susan Albers Mohrman
Center for Effective Organizations
Marshall School of Business, University of Southern California
Los Angeles, California 90015
(213) 740-9814

This chapter will be published in a book titled:

Consultation for Organization Change Revisited *(as part of the Research in Management Consulting series published by Information Age Publishing, Charlotte, North Carolina.*

The book is scheduled to be published in 2015.

Is there anything more irrelevant and anachronistic than applying change models developed in the 1950s to the development challenges facing organizations today? Despite a world where change, uncertainty, and discontinuity are common, organizations continue to employ traditional change models and emphasize traditional skill sets. These models depend on top-down executive leadership and focus, detailed risk analysis and mitigation, carefully planned and controlled communication, play-books that are “rolled out,” tools and scripts to ensure common understanding, training people to behave differently, and transition structures to govern the execution of work streams according to Gantt charts and detailed plans.

The world is demanding more nimble and agile organizations, yet most organizations treat change like a project to be managed instead of seeing it as one of the core processes driving effectiveness in organizations. Moreover, organizations, business schools, and professional associations continue to develop and train organization development (OD) and change management professionals in the same skills and competencies demanded by these old models. These groups churn out graduates who build their professional standing based on which templates, tools, and sometimes-faddish interventions they follow. Certifications in these templates and frameworks often substitute for the development of true organization development competencies.

This chapter proposes a dramatic shift and re-prioritization of the competencies associated with OD and change. Prior research on OD competencies focused on the skills, knowledge, and abilities related to self-awareness, managing the consulting and change processes, diagnosis, intervention design and delivery, and evaluation. We view these competencies as foundational, baseline skills that, today, are mostly commoditized. They are

necessary but not sufficient in a time where changes are no longer simple, linear, and independent.

Based on our research, our work with internal OD practitioners, and our own efforts in diverse organizations, we recently proposed a way of thinking about OD and change in more complex and continuous terms (Worley & Mohrman, 2015). We begin by summarizing the development of this “engage and learn” model. We believe it complements today’s challenges and reflects the types of change organizations are implementing. We then describe the competencies implied by that model and provide some recommendations about how to develop them.

TRADITIONAL CHANGE THEORY AND OD COMPETENCIES

Most change theories and models focus on *changing*, and in particular on the *implementation* of change. Implementation theory research focuses on the activities OD practitioners should perform to insure the success of a change effort (Bennis, 1966; Porras & Robertson, 1987). These theories involve steps like entry and contracting, diagnosing, action planning, intervention, and evaluation (Cummings & Worley, 2015). Implementation theories provide guidance regarding the necessary values and assumptions, activities, and competencies required to bring about successful organizational change.

The Standard View of Change¹

Most implementation theories are based on a logic developed in the 1950s. They helped companies manage change or plan change during periods of relative calm. Managers used these models to reform and align existing business strategies, capabilities, and behaviors in service of increased organization effectiveness. Implementation was incremental, gradual, focused, and controlled (i.e., “managed”) through carefully architected processes of design and implementation. These change models worked well as long as more dramatic and fundamental change was episodic and infrequent.

The most well-known implementation theory is Kurt Lewin’s (1951) change model and its derivatives. Lewin’s implementation theory consisted of three steps. The *unfreezing* process prepares the organization for change, often through processes of “psychological disconfirmation” (Schein, 1993). By introducing information showing discrepancies between behaviors desired by organization members and those behaviors currently exhibited, members could be motivated to engage in change activities. Today, we often talk in terms of “burning platforms,” recognizing disruptions, and reducing “resistance to change.”

The *moving* process shifts the behavior of the organization, group, or individual. It involves intervening in the system to develop new behaviors, values, and attitudes through the development of new skills and competencies or changes in organizational structures and

processes. Finally, *refreezing* stabilizes the organization in a new state of equilibrium. Supporting mechanisms, such as feedback processes and rewards, help to reinforce the new organizational state.

Kotter's (1995) eight-stage process, GE's change acceleration process (Garvin, 2000), Prosci's ADKAR model (Hiatt, 2006), and other popular change management models can be readily mapped onto Lewin's phases. For example, establishing a sense of urgency, creating the guiding coalition, developing a vision and strategy, and communicating the change vision are key steps in Kotter's model that reflect the unfreezing process. Empowering broad-based action and generating short-term wins are part of moving. Similarly, awareness and desire (A and D in the ADKAR model) reflect unfreezing, knowledge and ability reflect moving, and reinforcement reflects refreezing. Action research extended this model by suggesting that change was more cyclical than that implied by the refreezing stage but still held to the basic change logic.

Even the positive model of change popularized in the 1980s and 1990s does not escape this basic notion. For example, the appreciative inquiry (AI) process often follows a four-step progression of discover, dream, design, and destiny (Ludema, Whitney, Mohr, & Griffin, 2003). Discovering and dreaming unfreeze the organization, designing moves or increases the number of positive behaviors, and pursuing the organization's destiny is about refreezing around a particular vision or design.

These traditional implementation theories fit with the nature and pace of environmental change in the 60s, 70s, and 80s. They had clear beginnings and endings, were initiated and controlled by senior executives, were aligned to support the effective implementation of existing strategies, focused on specific systems with clear boundaries and scope, and helped people make sense of change. They worked to effectively sustain a competitive advantage.

Change Competencies and Organization Change

A succession of qualitative and practitioner-based studies suggested that a broad range of skills, knowledge, and abilities underpinned these theories. For example, Lippitt (1961), Shepard and Raia (1981), Neilsen (1984) and Church (2001) proposed that individuals needed to have diagnostic skills, a basic knowledge of behavioral science techniques, an understanding of the theories and methods within the consultant's own discipline, goal-setting and problem-solving skills, self-awareness and the ability to see things objectively, imagination, flexibility, honesty, consistency, and trust. Scholar-practitioners from the Academy of Management's Organization Development and Change Division developed two competency categories to guide curriculum development in Master's degree programs (Worley & Varney, 1998). Foundational competencies included social science knowledge oriented toward understanding organizational systems, including knowledge from organization behavior, psychology, group dynamics, management and organization theory, research methods, and business practices. Core

competencies involved understanding how systems changed over time. They included knowledge of organization design, organization research, system dynamics, OD history, and theories and models for change. They also involved the skills needed to manage the consulting process, to design and choose interventions, to facilitate processes, to develop clients' capability to manage their own change, and to evaluate organization change.

In one of the few quantitative studies, Worley, Rothwell, and Sullivan (2010) analyzed the relative importance of a list of competencies developed longitudinally by a broad group of well-known practitioners and researchers. The data suggested that "self-mastery" controlled the most variation in OD practice effectiveness. It supported the long-held belief that good OD practitioners know themselves and that such knowledge formed the basis of effective change processes. The data also suggested that effective OD practice was largely dependent on the ability to collect, analyze, and interpret different types of information for diagnostic, design, and evaluation purposes.

This finding – that rational, positivistic skills were nearly as important as emotional intelligence – represented a sea change in the practitioner competencies required to enhance an organization's capacity and effectiveness. Given the field's orientation toward interventions, consulting skills, and other process-oriented perspectives these results reflected the increasingly complex world in which organizations exist. Interestingly, and not surprisingly, practice was diverging from earlier rigorous but narrow and often academic descriptions of what constitutes effective OD. Few OD practitioners and change management professionals have been exposed to the full range of foundational and core competence domains of OD through formal education. There is, in a real sense, a "crisis" in the field as it looks to become relevant in an unstable world.

A NEW MODEL OF CHANGE

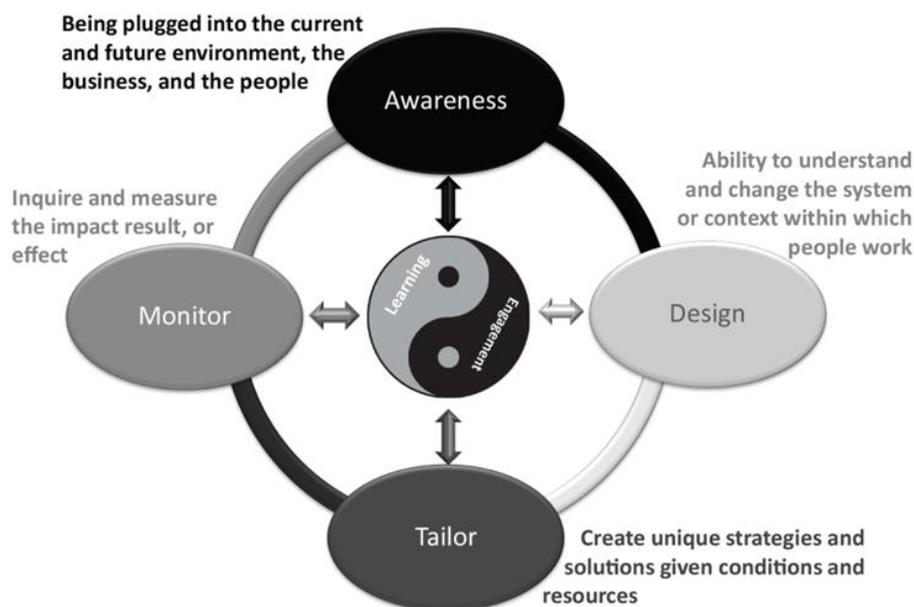
By the late 80's and into the 90's, executives, researchers, and consultants began to understand that the nature of change itself was changing. The term "transformation" became ubiquitous and connoted a change that was fundamental, broad, complex, deep, and urgent (Mohrman, Mohrman, Ledford, Cummings, & Lawler, 1989). For many companies, there were no more periods of calm where change could be managed. Organizations were in continuous transformation and researchers began to talk about the importance of "ambidexterity" (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2004). Organizations were being asked to: (1) drive performance today while changing their business models for tomorrow; (2) leverage their current advantaged capabilities and build whole new capability sets; (3) optimize their current product/service portfolios and offer customized solutions; and (4) minimize their current carbon footprint by making existing processes more efficient and adopt sustainable practices through disruptive innovations and fundamentally different ways of operating. IBM's transformation under Gerstner and Palmisano entailed hundreds of intertwined change projects, some of which are arguably still in process,

and IBM today is once again facing market and technological upheavals that demand more of the same for the foreseeable future.

Unfortunately, scholars have been slow to provide organizations and managers with the frameworks to handle the pressure for ongoing fundamental and transformational change. In the absence of new and relevant approaches, practitioners apply traditional models to continuous, transformational efforts. Not surprisingly, the change process struggles and leads to the oft-quoted 70% failure rate statistic. Traditional models are ill-equipped to cope with simultaneous, large, interdependent, and often conflicting change initiatives associated with ambidexterity. They must also deal with the short attention spans of leaders faced with the need to change many aspects of the business at once. When the speed and pervasiveness of change are high, when the organization is reacting to a stream of disruptions, and where changes in the organization’s culture may be required to develop new capabilities, implementation theories do not provide sufficient guidance, tools, or examples. These factors lead us to conclude that our traditional models of change management are obsolete.

Our research in organizations – primarily related to the implementation of new business models, reorganizations, and the pursuit of organization agility and sustainable effectiveness – helped us to understand the weaknesses of applying old models to new situations and led us to propose a new theory of changing. The “engage and learn” model is not a “change management” model; that implies way too much control over the process. It is a descriptive model of changing along with a set of organizational change routines – the recurring processes that characterize an organization – that allow an organization to transform itself continuously. It describes how to catalyze and accelerate continuous change rather than attempting to control it (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. The Engage and Learn Model



Each of the four activities or change routines in the model derives from an understanding of the requirements for organization effectiveness in a volatile, uncertain, and disruptive world. In retrospect, they were no less relevant in a relatively stable environment, although companies were not facing the extent of environmental change that has made these change routines compulsory elements of effectiveness. Moreover, this model is not a framework guiding OD practitioners how to implement a particular change or transformation. Rather the following routines characterize organizations that can continuously change themselves:

- Organization members are *aware* of the issues, challenges, and history of the organization. They are good at perceiving environmental trends and disruptions through the continual consideration of scenarios, options, and prior change efforts. As the pace of environmental change and disruption increases, organizations spend increasing amounts of time and energy being vigilant. They have their fingers on the pulse of employee satisfaction, customer loyalty, and other stakeholder perceptions.
- There is an increasing appreciation for the importance of *design* in shaping behavior, and a capacity to make continual design changes, large and small, that flexibly align resources and behavior with needed organizational capabilities. Far from seeking uniformity, effective change in a rapidly evolving environment recognizes that all designs are temporary and that strategic alignment does not require monolithic organizational systems, processes, and structures. Instead, change efforts arrange unique, valuable, and difficult-to-replicate resources to support learning from and building on diversity. Solution-based, global, and other complex strategies require more coordination and collaboration than the competitive strategies of the 1980s.
- Organizations continually *tailor* their designs and interventions as necessary to implement a strategy. Today's transformations cannot be controlled and programmed from the top. Creating targeted, specific, high impact interventions that "perturb" the system and set the conditions for self-organizing are increasingly relevant. Even well designed and defined Total Quality Management (TQM) and Six Sigma processes cannot be "cut and pasted" into the organization without tailoring. Change of the magnitude, speed, and diversity required today cannot be carried out without considerable emergent change and self-regulation through the organization. Because of the complexity and the interdependencies in the system, an important change challenge is to catalyze sufficient information exchanges across the system. This allows interdependent change activities to adjust to and influence one another.

- Organizations *monitor* the effect of organization changes on desired outcomes, understand the organization's progress in achieving its strategy, and make rapid adjustments based on what is learned. This process is central to the organization's capacity to detect error and learn from success in today's environment where changes must be made quickly, where there are many changes going on simultaneously in diverse parts of the organization, and where tight control is not possible or desirable.

Importantly, there are no "arrows" in the model; there is no particular prescribed sequence or starting point. All four of these change routines are happening at once, in various parts of the organization, and may be loosely or tightly coupled. Simultaneous, asynchronous, multi-faceted, and indeed seemingly conflicting changes are happening in different parts of the organization. Different actors in the organization may be working on new, high value-add business propositions while others are working to radically reduce costs. These changes may collide and force people throughout the organization to develop a more complex understanding of what is required for competitive success in today's environment.

The center of the model describes two continuous and complimentary modes of operating that motivate these change routines. *Engaging* and *Learning* link people throughout the organization to the various change routines, help make change happen, and support the diffusion and sharing of knowledge such that the organization gets better at changing over time. Any change agent's first motivation – and although we focus on OD practitioners in this chapter, we believe that these routines, motivations, and competencies will need to apply to most organization members – is to engage.² OD practitioners engage in awareness of the issues facing the organization through contact and connection to the larger context in which they operate. They plug into the relevant issues happening in the organization's environment, the business, and its people so that their activities are relevant to stakeholders. They understand how current organization design elements govern and drive behavior in the organization. OD practitioners are able to conceive of alternative designs that elicit and reinforce new behaviors.

OD practitioners engage in activities that tailor ongoing change interventions and designs to operate effectively within the culture and identity of the organization, its strategy, and its resources. In today's complex and diverse global organizations, sensitivity to different sub-cultures and market contexts is required to avoid fitting round pegs into square holes. Tailoring recognizes that each unit's situation is unique and must be accounted for when implementing change. Many multinational companies have long ago discovered that successfully implementing "One Company" solutions generated from headquarters depends on a cadre of local change agents who can modify the solution to fit the context.

Finally, change is likely to be fast and iterative. Monitoring activities involve the rapid collection and interpretation of appropriate data to understand whether innovations,

interventions, and new designs are having the intended impact. OD practitioners have a keen sense of impact and take advantage of it to continue to hone the capabilities of the organization. This orientation is quite opposite of the traditional change prescription to freeze and institutionalize change.

The second motivation, learning, is the outcome of intentional engagement in the four change routines, and almost all theories of change suggest that behavioral engagement and learning are inextricably linked. Through participation in continuous and simultaneous cycles of awareness, design, tailoring, and monitoring, change agents learn. Capital One Financial Services, for example, learned that repeated change attempts, transparency, and cross-organizational learning formed a foundation for the development of a system-wide change capability. This capability depended not only on knowledgeable individuals, but also on collective processes that became core routines of how the organization operates.

Learning allows each change routine to become more efficient and effective as people throughout the organization become proficient at changing. Systems and processes for learning and exchange, such as after action reviews, reflection and discussion, and transparent sharing of information, become embedded in the change routines, which themselves become embedded in the way the organization functions. The information and knowledge that is shared and accessible throughout the organization becomes the springboard for change to emerge from anywhere. It supports the further development of an organic change capability rather than for frameworks imposed by “experts.” OD practitioners must now carry deep but fungible understandings and frameworks that support devaluing their own orientations, work across many perspectives, encourage emergence, and be part of collective processes generating novel approaches. OD practitioners must learn how to encourage change where they are not even participants. The world is moving too fast for the traditional jostling among internal and external change professionals for who leads, whose model prevails, who gets to frame the change for executives, and what tools will be used. Just as other members of the organization, OD practitioners must learn to fit into the swirl.

OD AND CHANGE COMPETENCIES IMPLIED BY THE ENGAGE AND LEARN MODEL

Using the engage and learn model as a new basis for change, we reviewed the prior OD competency research, our own experiences in guiding complex change, and the many cases/projects from students that we have supervised/shadowed over the years to develop a set of proposed competencies (see Table 1).

	Engage	Learn
Awareness	<p>Actively seeks out information about current and future environments, the business, and the organization’s people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regularly reviews industry studies, competitor analyses, internal climate/culture/engagement data ▪ Has a strong network of relationships with key influencers and implementers ▪ Forms evidence-based perspectives about the challenges facing the organization and its strengths and weaknesses 	<p>Reflects on and adds intelligence to understandings about environmental changes, business strategies, and shifts in talent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reviews and updates trends and scenarios. ▪ Develops alternative extensions and implications ▪ Expands relationships with stakeholders, engages in discussions about how to do scanning better ▪ Seeks feedback from prior experiences ▪ Reviews prior assessments and seeks to improve ability to develop implications
Design	<p>Works to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the current organization, develops an awareness of alternative designs being used in the organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintains an inventory of cases using different models, design logics ▪ Has a broad knowledge of structural alternatives ▪ Can leverage a variety of design processes ▪ Appreciates the importance of alignment to performance ▪ Can apply a variety of diagnostic assessments 	<p>Incorporates varied experiences and knowledge into new understandings about organization design options and their relationship to effectiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expands knowledge of design options; Works with stakeholders to discuss alternatives ▪ Constantly reviewing methods of speed and flexibility ▪ Improves understanding of how design features fit together; deeply appreciates role of alignment and performance
Tailor	<p>Co-creates unique strategies, solutions, and interventions given conditions and resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintains an inventory of tools, exercises, cases, and processes for engaging stakeholders ▪ Manages “ownership” of a change well ▪ Understands how to modify design features to fit cultural assumptions ▪ Comfortable with high impact interventions (e.g., large-group interventions, dialogue) 	<p>Develops and shares knowledge for adapting change and design processes, offers suggestions for how best to create a unique way to address key issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Modifies existing knowledge regarding intervention processes, improves constantly ▪ Helps others build capacity to customize solutions ▪ Reflects on and integrates new thinking about how to modify change management models to fit the current context ▪ Builds new skills in change processes ▪ Increases understanding of and options for handling complexity
Monitor	<p>Quickly measures and monitors the impact, result, or effect of design changes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regularly participates in assessment activities, crunching data, collecting and feeding back data to stakeholders ▪ Uses pulse surveys to make rapid assessment ▪ Leverages informal connections to make rapid assessments ▪ Closely monitors the “voice of the customer” 	<p>Builds abilities to see patterns in change and develops more complex and nuanced assessments of intervention effectiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Constantly seeking to learn new ways of collecting, analyzing, and presenting data ▪ Seeks out, tries, and tests new ways of increasing the speed and flexibility of assessment ▪ Develops pattern recognition skills

Engagement in the awareness routine relies on information gathering competencies related to current and future environments, the business, the organization's people, and about disruptive trends and organizational approaches that offer both possible solutions and threats. OD practitioners are demonstrating engagement in the awareness routine when they sense that their organization seems to be hurtling through continual transformations with insufficient experience and expertise in managing change of this magnitude. They understand the organization's strengths and weaknesses, scan for solutions, such as through seminars and workshops on organization design, and reach out for help.

When learning motivates the awareness routine, OD professionals must be able to reflect on, significantly challenge, and add intelligence to understandings about environmental changes, business strategies, shifts in talent, and the dynamics of fundamental change. The goal is to continually assimilate new awareness and make accommodations to one's practice. The process is simultaneously occurring at the organizational level, where the organization must shift from environmental scanning to absorptive capacity: the ability to acquire or assimilate information and ultimately exploit it (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Zahra & George, 2002). For example, it is not enough for companies and their OD practitioners doing business in China to understand that the power relationships between the regions of the world are changing dramatically and that this is a threat to current ways of doing business. The company must understand and prepare itself for disruption by seeking and implementing changes in its business model. The OD practitioner must learn about new approaches that can help incorporate this awareness and solutions into professional and organizational practices.

Engaging in the design routine involves understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the current organization and developing alternative designs for consideration. Anytime an organization initiates a diagnosis of its structure, operations, and systems, it is engaging in the design routine. What is different about the competencies here compared to other traditional change models is the extent of contextualization that is required. The engage and learn model is focused on a whole system, not a piece or subsystem, although many simultaneous changes may be occurring at any level or sub-system. This means that OD practitioners must be aware of what else is going on in the system and how it all fits together into a whole. OD professionals must have design knowledge and skills to understand the organization's dynamics, global functions, and the enterprise. They must recognize that any design has strengths and weaknesses, and may require quick adjustments or even jolts as customers, technology, or competitors change. As a result, they must be able to assess current designs and propose alternative designs that are "good enough" to move forward with.

The development of "design criteria" facilitates this work (Mohrman & Cummings, 1989). Design criteria are statements of required capabilities and link strategy to design options. They serve as a force for necessary alignment across the organization. Not perfect but workable designs that people see as legitimate and relevant are keys here. OD practitioners

know that the real test is in implementing the design in a tailored way. For example, entering new and emerging geographic markets often require unique design configurations that do not currently exist in the organization. To support the new organization, resource allocation, planning processes, and reward systems change may be necessary to align design elements and make collaboration and synergy possible.

The learning motivation is in play when design activities incorporate varied experiences and knowledge into new understandings about organization design options and their relationship to effectiveness. For example, practitioners designing a new market organization may consciously bring expertise to bear not only about the local market and cultural context, but also from others who have lived through the stages of development in other parts of the world. These activities provide lessons learned about how to lay the foundation for effective start-ups but also for effective transitions through the lifecycle. OD professionals need the competency to build and guide such a learning process, and to build networks for learning.

Competencies associated with engagement in tailoring activities involve the ability to co-create unique strategies and solutions given conditions and resources. Managing high levels of participation and involvement, the ownership of the change process, conversations that transfer knowledge to the client system about effective ways to lead change, and customization of the interventions, changes, and systems are important skills in this routine. As OD practitioners reflect on their experience, they develop and share knowledge for adapting change and design processes, learn ways to make systems more flexible and faster, and build the capacity to coordinate multiple changes. Helping an organization with the local and emergent processes of tailoring, error detection, and iteration, and then extracting and disseminating the learning are competences required by OD professionals in the new change model. The design of commercialization processes for pharmaceuticals, for example, has traditionally emanated from the HQ country and rolled out to other regions. Yet the successful tailoring of this process to local healthcare systems, populations, and cultural norms is the key determinant of market success. Determining how much tailoring is necessary and how its implementation can be accelerated are examples of the new knowledge base.

Finally, engagement activities related to monitoring will involve skills and knowledge associated with developing measures to quickly understand the impact, result, or effect of design or other organizational changes. Often called implementation feedback, OD practitioners must be able to quickly develop “lead” indicators that can predict whether a change will have its intended outcome, and, as necessary, make adjustments. As an example, a group of consultants implementing a three-day leadership and capacity-building program for 25 nongovernment organization (NGO) leaders in China asked the participants if the work on the first day and the plan for the next two days was meeting their expectations. The consultants had listened to client expectations and contracted to deliver certain frameworks and exercises. But the participants –who were selected by the client – had different expectations. After the

feedback, the group adjusted the program's agenda and design to meet both client and participant expectations. Similarly, a six-month, post implementation assessment process in the finance function of a large technology firm determined that most internal perceptions of the redesign were positive but most external perceptions were not. Since the redesign had been predicated on changing the role of the function in adding value to the company and customers, the data suggested additional changes were necessary.

When marketplace changes are happening faster and faster, awareness and monitoring activities complement one another and help to keep initiatives on course. As another example, one year after an IT redesign in a large software firm, an evaluation effort was used to discuss "what we had missed" during the diagnosis phase, "how would we do it better next time," and "what do we need to address now?" This is the essence of learning in the design routine and demonstrates how different change routines can happen simultaneously. When OD practitioners learn from the monitoring routine, they build abilities to see patterns in change and develop more complex and nuanced assessments of intervention effectiveness. Internal consultants are advantageously positioned for such learning. External consultants are often long gone before the impact of the change is clear. Yet, when many changes are going on simultaneously, one can argue that following up on each is critical to avoid chaos in the system and should be built into the routines of the organization.

New and Reprioritized Competencies for OD Practitioners

We compared the traditional OD competencies with those described above as part of the Engage and Learn model to arrive at an initial set of recommended changes.³ Traditional competencies tend to focus on engage activities related to awareness and tailoring routines. This reflects OD's traditional strengths, including its devotion to diagnosis and assessment, managing employee ownership of the change process, and developing specific interventions. Somewhat surprisingly, there is much more emphasis in the traditional models on engagement over learning. OD is well known for its action research/action learning orientation, and consulting models always include evaluation. However, diagnosis and intervention activities dominate the lists. Focusing on the systemic issues of design and monitoring, and understanding how to implement change better receive less attention.

Moreover, there is a decidedly inward looking feel to most traditional awareness activities. Large group interventions, external stakeholder management processes, staying current with technology, systems dynamics, and cross-cultural perspectives – all of which have received increased emphasis in the OD community during the past several decades – have started to tilt the field toward external perspectives. However, OD's traditional emphasis toward process issues over content results in a more internal focus when comparing traditional competencies with the engage and learn model.

The old competency models do include several of the content competencies we propose here. Organization design, management theory, systems theory, functional knowledge of the business, and other knowledge and skill areas related to content are referred to in all lists. However, the relative emphasis in OD has always been on process skills. Process consultation, managing the consulting process, helping skills, self-awareness and interpersonal skills, feedback, and conflict management have been the most closely linked to traditional OD values on human development. The current and exuberant level of growth in coaching has enabled many OD practitioners to serve a growing market with a comfortable skill set, but such a role also limits the OD practitioner's ability to address system-level change.

This comparison suggests several competency areas for development or increased prioritization. For OD practitioners who want to implement complex and frequent change to develop an organization's performance and change capabilities, there are four obvious gaps. They include 1) knowledge and skill related to organization design, 2) a broader and more strategic awareness of the external environment, 3) the ability to tailor design features, and 4) helping the organization to rapidly detect error and make corrections.

Organization Design

Although OD practitioners can usually cite or provide summary statements about design models, such as Galbraith's Star Model, the McKinsey 7S model, or the Nadler-Tushman Congruence Model among many others, that knowledge is shallow compared to the requirements of design in today's environment. Like most managers, many OD practitioners may believe organization design is primarily about structure, yet cannot discuss the strengths and weaknesses of different structures in changing contexts and cannot recommend one structure over another for a given situation. They may not understand the range of options for coordination and integration of different functions, regions, or other organization units, nor can they articulate the rudiments and criticality of setting decision rights (and often confuse this with RACI charts). OD practitioners today need to know how to go beyond structure as well as assess and design such management practices as goal setting systems, resource allocation systems, and planning systems that align to the strategy and economic logic of the organization.

OD practitioners typically argue that OD is not supposed to be involved in content issues. Such decisions are in a manager's purview. OD strengths and purposes are related to orchestrating processes that ensure sound decisions, commitment to change, and efficient execution. Nothing we are proposing here contradicts that belief. However, the statement of OD's purpose and strength contains an inaccurate assumption – that managers know and understand organization design. If managers' and OD practitioners' understanding of alternative structures and designs is limited, the typical process of gathering appropriate stakeholders together to understand the problem, design a solution, and agree on an action plan is inefficient and shortsighted. To be sure, the skills necessary to conduct that process are

important, and the engage and learn model assumes such tailoring will take place. However, the pace and complexity of change today demands insight that the group may not have. The process of OD requires that the practitioner transfer knowledge and skill to the client system and that requirement is not restricted to process knowledge. Someone needs to bring additional, substantive knowledge to the engagement, and we suggest that the OD practitioner is the best candidate.

Strategic Awareness and the External Environment

OD practitioners also need to increase their ability to understand and relate to external issues. OD's predilection for diagnosis, interpersonal skills, and internal process issues suggests a perception bias. External environmental trends, customer shifts, competitor moves, and technology changes create new contexts and drive the need for new business models. This type of strategic thinking has not been OD's stock-in-trade. Although the field has espoused this awareness for years and acknowledges its importance in traditional competency lists, it has not followed through. Instead, the obsession with tools, templates, and step-by-step processes has moved many OD practitioners farther away from the external issues faced by companies and prevented the establishment of relevant linkages between external forces and internal changes.

Tailoring Design Features

Third, there is a gap in tailoring skills related to the lack of understanding of design. A different kind of tailoring has been a strength of the OD and change management field. OD calls this "managing ownership" such that the responsibility for the change rests with the client system. That still remains a critical function, especially when considering the need for organizations to handle the multiple and emergent needs of today's business environment. But tailoring in the engage and learn model is more than that. Because of OD's strength – customizing solutions – and its weakness – a too-heavy focus on interpersonal and other process issues – practitioners often solve problems by creating projects that design *new* programs and systems to replace old ones. A quicker approach is needed.

Modifying existing design components, such as structure, reward/recognition systems, leadership development processes, decision rights, goal setting, and work designs, to fit culture and identity is often more effective at facilitating and accelerating change. When Cambia Health Solutions made their initial transformation to agility, its decision to work "within" existing systems was an important contribution to speed and success (Worley & Mohrman, 2015). Working "within" an existing system often produces more change than would be created by establishing a new one from scratch. The lack of familiarity with design elements and a bias toward creating new systems slows the change process and increases the likelihood of resistance. If OD practitioners can model and teach quick tailoring approaches, they can help

the organization more quickly achieve the amount of organic and emergent change needed today.

Detecting Errors and Making Corrections

Finally, narrowly defined projects and initiatives, carefully crafted diagnosis and solution generation processes, and meticulous implementation activities characterize most OD work. This focus on implementation without sufficient monitoring and evaluation does not fit the rapid pace required in today's uncertain environment where rapid detection and correction of error is essential. And yet, unleashing multiple changes in far-flung parts of the organization system without hierarchical control carries the risk of many failures. It requires a robust and adequate monitoring system. A major contribution of OD professionals in this changing landscape of change routines should be to help the organization develop rapid detection approaches, such as opening up routes for immediate feedback and using sophisticated data analysis techniques to detect and direct attention to performance deviations. Guiding the development of monitoring systems capable of dealing with a continually changing organization may represent one of the most promising frontiers for OD competence in the future.

Developing New Competencies

The biggest and most obvious first step is to learn the principles and practices of organization design. This is not a new recommendation, just a recommendation to take the advice of every practitioner or researcher who has studied OD competencies. As a competency area, the principles and practices of organization design have been included in every OD competency model published. The steady stream of changing environmental and customer requirements demand agile reconfiguration of the organization that is driven not by internal preferences and beliefs based on past experience, but by external signals. Yet the purposeful application of deep design understanding has not been the focus of OD. OD practitioners have tended to focus on a single system, not the whole system. There's been an emphasis on interpersonal skills and process issues under the banner of applied behavioral science. This has to change because such a narrow definition of behavioral science ignores powerful levers of change, empowerment, and effectiveness. OD and change practitioners need to understand the pros and cons of this approach and marry their strengths with design principles to influence organization dynamics. This is about *organization* development, not *organizational* development.

There are two aspects to the development of this competency – learning and practice. First, OD practitioners need to get deeper into organization design models. Our recently departed colleague Jay Galbraith has left a legacy of writing on the subject, and he was blessed with the ability to explain principles clearly and hook them to case examples. His books and articles should be required reading (see, for instance, Galbraith, 1977, 2008). But there are

other writings as well that should be included in a practitioner's knowledge base (see Mohrman, Cohen and Mohrman, 1995; Laloux, 2014; Stanford, 2013). There are also a variety of organization design workshops, courses, and seminars in the US and Europe that can provide rich learning experiences.

Second, and more important than learning the principles, is practicing them. We are convinced that design skills – when married with traditional OD process skills – represent a profound and powerful, although complex, activity. Combining these skills is as much art as science. Learning the practice of design and design implementation, being able to help a client through a diagnostic process but also being able to represent important substantive concerns about the choices being considered, requires some prudent risk taking and experience-based judgment. Formal OD training tends not to include organization design practicums, and many OD practitioners get their training within the confines of the frameworks and recipes of consulting firms, if at all.

In particular, OD practitioners need to take on different kinds of projects. Traditional OD practitioners (and we recognize that is a broad and fuzzy generalization) are more likely to be involved in talent management discussions, assessing an organization's readiness for change, planning an offsite for a top management team building session, or working with a group to plan and implement a specific change. These are clearly important tasks and they will continue to be. But to approach the type of complex changes we are discussing here, practitioners must begin taking on more complex projects that will likely challenge their existing competencies, confidence, and maybe even career. The risks associated with this choice can be mitigated by partnering with a design consultant. It is also important to gain proficiency and confidence through experience with larger scale projects that involve multiple changes happening simultaneously and projects involving multiple functions or business units. The Engage and Learn model entails expanding one's portfolio beyond specific redesign projects to include the design and catalyzing of change routines throughout the organization. Perhaps most important, to deal with the engage and learn model, OD practitioners will have to become comfortable working as part of teams that bring together diverse knowledge bases to address complex problems and many concurrent changes at different stages of development.

CONCLUSION

Understanding, causing, and accelerating change is the topic of our age. Although that has always been true to some extent, it is even more so today. The traditional models of change management that served organizations in the past are no longer sufficient to guide them through the types of changes they will face in the future. By implication, new and different theories of change and a new set of competencies are called for. The engage and learn model describes a new way of thinking about how change happens and drives the development of a proposed new set of competencies.

The engage and learn model posits that the scale and pace of change in today's world can only be handled if the routines of change become deeply embedded in an organization, and that a key role of OD practitioners is to ensure that they are vibrant and active. Two motivations – engagement and learning – drive the activities in four different change routines – awareness, design, tailoring, and monitoring. For each of these motivations and routines, an initial set of competencies was proposed. Together, they were compared with prior OD and change competencies. While supporting the traditional competencies of diagnosis and assessment, a strong orientation toward leveraging behavioral science knowledge, and the customization of intervention activities to a system's context, the new model proposes important new skills and a reprioritization of old ones. In particular, future OD practitioners must become more focused on the external environment, familiar with the organization design levers that drive behavior (as opposed to a prior orientation to develop individual skills that better cope with ineffective designs). In addition, they must be more able to orchestrate multiple changes in service of an often shifting and emerging strategy and able to help build the routines of change into the fabric of the organization.

NOTES

1. The sections describing traditional implementation theories and the development of our engage and learn model draw heavily from our *Organization Dynamics* article, “Is Change Management Obsolete.”
2. We are aware of the potential confusion that may exist between our use of the term “engage” and “engaging” and the popular notion of “employee engagement.” We use the term as a verb – to engage, connect, make contact with, or sense – rather than as a noun describing someone’s affective state.
3. A copy of the table and the comparison conclusions is available upon request from the authors.

REFERENCES

- Bennis, W. (1966). *Changing organizations*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Church, A. (2001). The professionalization of organization development. In R. Woodman & W. Pasmore (Eds.), *Research in organization change and development* (pp. 1-42). Oxford: JAI Press.
- Cohen, W. & Levinthal, D. (1990). Absorptive capacity: A new perspective on learning and innovation. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 35(1), 128-152.
- Cummings, T. & Worley, C. (2015). *Organization development and change* (10th ed.). Mason, OH: Cengage Publishing.
- Galbraith, J. (1977). *Organization design*. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley.
- Galbraith, J. (2008). *Designing matrix organizations that actually work: How IBM, Procter & Gamble and others design for success*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Garvin, D. (2000). *Learning in action: A guide to putting the learning organization to work*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Hiatt, J. (2006). *ADKAR: A model for change in business, government and the community*. Loveland, CO: Learning Centre Publications.
- Kotter, J. (1996). *Leading change*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Laloux, F. (2014). *Reinventing organizations*. Brussels: Nelson Parker.
- Lawler, E.E. III & Worley, C.G. (2006). *Built to change*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Lewin, K. (1951). *Field theory in social science*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.
- Lippitt, R. (1961). Dimensions of the consultant’s job. In W. Bennis, K. Benne, & R. Chin (Eds.), *The planning of change* (pp. 156-161). New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.
- Ludema, J., Whitney, D., Mohr, B. & Griffin, T. (2003). *The appreciative inquiry summit: A practitioner’s guide for leading large-group change*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.
- Mohrman, S.A. & Cummings, T. (1989). *Self-designing organizations: Learning how to create high performance*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

- Mohrman, A., Mohrman, S.A., Ledford, G., Cummings, T., & Lawler, E. (1989). *Large-scale organization change* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass).
- Mohrman, S.A, Cohen, S., & Mohrman, A. (1995). Designing team-based organizations. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Neilsen, E. 1984. *Becoming an OD practitioner*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- O'Reilly, C. A., & Tushman, M. L. (2004). The ambidextrous organization. *Harvard Business Review*, 82(4), 74-83.
- Porras, J. & Robertson, P. (1987). Organization development theory: A typology and evaluation. In R. Woodman & W. Pasmore (Eds.), *Research in organizational change and development* (pp. 1-57). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Schein, E. (1993). How can organizations learn faster? The challenge of entering the green room. *Sloan Management Review*, 34(2): 85-92.
- Shepard, K. & Raia, A. (1981). The OD training challenge. *Training and Development Journal*, 35: 90–96.
- Stanford, N. (2013). *Organization design: Engaging with change* (2d ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Worley, C. & Varney, G. (1998). A search for a common body of knowledge for master's level organization development and change programs —An invitation to join the discussion. *Academy of Management ODC Newsletter*, (Winter): 1–4.
- Worley, C., Rothwell, W., & Sullivan, R. (2010). Competencies of OD practitioners. In W. Rothwell & R. Sullivan (Eds.), *Practicing organization development* (3d ed.) (pp. 107-135). San Diego, CA: Pfeiffer).
- Worley, C., Williams, T.D., & Lawler, E.E. III(2014). *The agility factor: Building adaptable organizations for superior performance*. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Zahra, S. & George, G. (2002). Absorptive capacity: A review, reconceptualization, and extension. *Academy of Management Review*, 27(2), 185-203.