In 1978, French and Bell said

Enormous opportunity and potential exist for the OD movement in the future. Organizations throughout the world need the unique help that can be provided by highly trained interventionist using people-oriented action research approaches. The future of OD is bright, as long as the high-quality hard work of the past continues.

. . . What is OD all about? OD is about people helping each other to unleash the human spirit and human capability in the work place. (1978, p. 333)

After 34 years, that utterance remains true:

1. Enormous opportunity and potential still exists for the OD movement in work places worldwide.
2. OD will remain relevant as long as we have hard working, high quality, and trained OD practitioners.
3. The core of OD – to unleash the human spirit and human capability in the work place still remains our calling.

The continuous rise of OD practitioners in the North, South, East, and West is testimony to the type of help organizational leaders require to stay vibrant in the current context. The time has come for OD practitioners from all spheres to work together to respond to the global need. It is in this spirit this special issue of the OD Practitioner was shaped for UK practitioners to share how they think and approach the unique type of assistance we offer organizations.

The OD field was born and bred in the United States with significant contributions from members of The Tavistock Institute in the UK. Since then, the US has continued to lead the way in the field while UK Organization Development has languished. In the UK there are very few academic programs, no significant OD professional associations, and a minimal amount of OD publications. However, there are encouraging shifts in the UK scene. Just to name a few: there has been a proliferation of jobs in OD; there are fantastic, eager practitioners who want to learn and grow their practices; and there have been major innovative applications (especially large scale methodology) of OD in the health care system. Central and local governments rely on their OD practitioners more and more to engage with both the community they serve and the staff that carry out the work. Some universities have taken the lead to research and teach OD in their academic programs. Business schools have begun to make OD a prominent area of study. The National HR conference has many tracks on OD. We now have an OD practitioners’ continuous development program and an advance OD certificate. There are more and more UK practitioners who have done superb work at the societal and community level, and they have started publishing their experience.

This issue of the ODP highlights a small portion of the pool of talented and committed OD practitioners in the UK. We seek to ensure that all of us who practice OD in UK become a part of a global community of practitioners – to share what we are learning with our worldwide community of colleagues. In that way, we can together construct a bright future for OD as predicted by French and Bell.

The Articles in this Issue

We begin with an innovative approach to dealing with a gap in GlaxoSmithKline’s capability to drive sustainable transformation. Jacqui Alexander and Margaret Huggins describe how they started, scaled up, and began to embed a combination of Lean Six Sigma, Project Management, and OD that they called the Accelerated Delivery Program (ADP) to improve GSK’s way of working. They also highlight the OD theory that informed and contributed to this highly practical initiative and reflect on what they learned as OD practitioners.

Then Jean E. Neumann writes about the professional adjustments she made when she relocated from the US to the UK. She describes her journey from NTL-influenced training and development to her encounter with The Tavistock Institute’s approaches. Using selected critical incidents, she reflects personally on what she has learned about being an OD consultant in the four countries that constitute the UK.

Bridget Farrands describes how her consulting has been shaped by training and OD assignments in both the US and Europe. She illustrates the practice and application of some core Gestalt principles in working with a strategic team, the OD implications of such work, and how the Gestalt concept of figure and ground provides a central creative tension to her organizational work.

Julie Beedon explains how the field of Large Scale Interventions (LSI) has developed in the UK and what practitioners need to pay attention to if they want to use LSIs effectively. She explores the impact and potential of four stories from her own work in the UK that embody the underlying principles at the heart of LSIs.

Useful and pioneering work on developing organizations can be done in an environment where Organization Development has not yet been established or widely recognized as a field of practice. David Roe’s case study demonstrates how to quietly and opportunistically adapt OD-inspired interventions to the needs of an organization, while holding fast to OD practice and its principles of openness, democracy, and learning.

Malcolm L. Hill, a PhD research scientist, and P. F. Pegg Jones, an OD consultant, present a case where data collection, analysis, and metrics were embedded as integral ingredients in a culture change program. The program’s aim was to establish Project Management and High Performing Team practices in the project matrix environment of a multi-discipline, multi-site chemical development division.
Gifford Tanser and Penny Lee demonstrate that any situation of change in an organization can be used as an opportunity to implement effective OD change management and to get an integrated set of benefits that can be harvested in the future. They show how focusing on leadership development, talent development, and talent assessment as part of a succession planning process is it possible to develop an organization’s agility and culture for managing anticipated future change.

Drew Watson and Jonathan Cormack explore the important link between executive development and Organization Development, particularly building leadership capability and cooperation, aligning strategic intent and culture, and tackling real change issues that impact organization performance and effectiveness. They describe the development and current state of their executive development program, Leading the Journey, which is targeted to 150 executives in the most senior positions in Standard Chartered Bank.

In order to create the space needed for building sustainable change in a fast paced consumer industry, Dagmar Daubner and Andreas Priestland combined action research and systems engagement in a process they call the SEARCH approach. They write about how they used this approach to design and implement a worldwide innovative leadership development program for first-line managers in HEINEKEN International.

How can we deliver change with people and culture built into what we do, rather than something to be fixed afterwards, with a backdrop of external criticism that was damaging staff morale and the employee brand, internal feedback from people that are confused, scared, or ambivalent, and a leadership team that wants to do things faster? Carrie Birmingham describes an integrated and multi-system OD process lead by an HR Director, Change Team, Leadership Team, and a dedicated Transformation Director in the commercial unit of News International.

According to Andrea Adams, most CEOs are concerned with two things: how to get their organization to deliver against expectations in the short term, and how to develop the organization so that it is fit for the future. At the same time they have to deal with globalization, the pace and scale of technological developments, demands for greater transparency of leadership, and closer communication with customers and stakeholders. Adams discusses recent research that offers insights into the increasing need for OD expertise among CEOs.

Emily Sweetman and Maxine Gooding present the results of a survey of UK based OD practitioners. They explore the dominant characteristics of the OD field in the UK and Europe; how the practitioners connect with each other and expand their knowledge and practice; trends and shifts in the field; and what needs to be done to continue to develop OD in the UK.

Finally, Gervase Bushe reviews Sarah Lewis’s Positive Psychology at Work: How Positive Leadership and Appreciative Inquiry Create Inspiring Organizations. Lewis’ book offers a practical perspective on positive organization behavior research and models for the practice of good management.

I enjoyed working with these authors and with the ODP editor John Vogelsang. I also want to thank the members of the ODP Editorial Board who have given great support to the authors to help them make their voices clear. I sincerely hope you will enjoy reading about the work UK practitioners have done, some very courageously. May this issue prompt further dialogue among the OD community worldwide.

Mee-Yan Cheung-Judge, PhD, is the creator and driving force behind Quality & Equality, a UK based consulting firm. She is a Visiting Fellow of Roffey Park Institute in UK, a Senior Fellow of the Singapore Civil Service College, and the Dean of the NTL/Q&E UK OD certificate program. She is a member of NTL Institute, a trustee on the OD Network Board, and a founding member of the European ODN which will be launched in November 2012. She was voted one of the 25 most influential thinkers in HR by the UK publication HR Magazine for the work she has done to bring OD into the HR profession. She is passionate about upping the quality of OD education in the UK and is known as the campaigner-academic-practitioner among her circle. She can be reached at LMYCJ@aol.com.

Reference


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Things are changing in the world of human resources.

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**About the Editors:**

*OD PRACTITIONER* is the quarterly journal of the Organization Development Network, an international association whose members are committed to practicing organization development as an applied behavioral science.

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