



Institute for
**Organisational
Development**

What makes for effective and sustainable organisational development interventions

A research case study



Research context

The following is based on a research project commissioned and supervised by the now Institute for Organisational Development (previously The Beech Centre), undertaken during 2015 by Jirong Li, Research Project Student, as part of an academic dissertation submitted to the University of Sheffield Management School (distinction awarded). The reflections on the findings have been developed further by the Institute for Organisational Development in 2018.

What was the project?

The project explored the impact of Organisational Development (OD) interventions. The findings were gathered from Member organisations of the now Institute for Organisational Development, eliciting their views, through a questionnaire survey and interviews.



What were the key findings?

- 1) An effective OD intervention** is well-designed and collaboratively (on a scientific basis) tailored to an organisation's context. It should be customer-driven to satisfy the organisation's needs, be outcome-oriented to improve organisational performance and strengthen the organisation's OD competence. The intervention also should be conducted within schedule and budget as well as at a professional level of quality.
- 2) A sustainable OD intervention** develops managerial and leadership abilities in managing change. It also should embed the positive results of change in organisational culture and strategies, and enable OD into daily work to enable transformation leading to improved performance/success in the long term.
- 3) Measurement and evaluation of OD interventions** should consider integration of both **effectiveness** and **sustainability**.

Effective OD Interventions

Tailoring to organisation's context and designing on the basis of valid knowledge

Implementing within schedule, budget and a certain level of quality

Satisfying organisation's needs and improving their performance and OD competence

Sustainable OD Interventions

Developing change management abilities

Reflecting on organisational routine through culture and strategy

Improving performance and achieving long-term success





4) Influential staff involvement and strategy revision contributed more to effectiveness whereas the development of outstanding individuals was more related to sustainability.

5) The consolidation of results in culture, the establishment of a **shared vision** and the modification of systems, structures and policies benefited equally both effectiveness and sustainability.



Key recommendations

1) An evaluation strategy should include both intervention variables and outcome variables.

2) The purpose of applying intervention measures is to examine whether interventions are designed appropriately and are implemented as designed and expected.

Stages	Intervention measures
Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whether an intervention is tailored to organisation's context and meets their requirements• Whether an intervention is designed on the basis of valid knowledge or past experience
During-implementation evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff engagement and communication• The development of a shared diagnosis, a shared vision with implementation strategies• The open environment for staff to present and implement creative, non-traditional and risk-taking ideas• The revision and fitness of organisational systems, structures and policies• The recognition and celebration of short-term achievements• Staff recruitment, recognition, reward, promotion and development• Embedding in culture and transferring to leadership and organisational strategies
After-implementation evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whether an intervention is completed within intended schedule, budget and at a certain level of quality/professionalism• Whether organisation is satisfied with the outcome

3) Three types of outcome measures could be used to examine whether interventions reach the goal and produce the expected outcome and whether individual and organisational performance is improved.



Direct Measures in the Short and Medium-Term

- Employees' attitudes
- Employees' satisfaction
- Employees' job behaviour

Indirect Measures in the Long-Term

- Service quality
- Customers' recognition
- Financial performance

Other Assistant Measures

- Leadership
- Individual learning and development

Types	Measures	Example outcome measures
Direct measures <i>around employees</i>	Employees' attitudes	Attitudes about self, others, the job and the organisation
	Employees' satisfaction	General satisfaction with the organisation, work group and supervisor
	Employees' job behaviour	Absenteeism, turnover, grievances, productivity and efficiency
Indirect measures <i>around organisational performance</i>	Product/services quality	Product/service quality measures
	Customers' recognition	Customers' complaints and satisfaction
	Financial performance	Cost-efficiency, revenue uplift
Assistant measures <i>normally intermediate between direct and indirect</i>	Leadership	OD competence, consulting, facilitation, performance coaching, change management abilities and their practice in daily work Adult: Adult behaviour
	Individual learning and development	





What this means for OD Practitioners

- Effectiveness and Sustainability of OD interventions requires care and attention across all phases of The Consulting Cycle (a structured and collaborative approach to contracting for and designing, implementing and evaluating OD interventions based on robust system diagnosis, *Peter Block and others*).
- An evaluation strategy should be considered from the outset to include both intervention and outcome measures.
- A shift in employees' attitudes should be a key focus for contracting – these can be directly measured in the short and medium-term.

What this means for organisations

- All activity within the organisation, including the interventions to develop it, should be aligned and connected together – heading towards the same vision.
- Having a collaborative, strategic-level partnership rather than commissioning tactical and responsive interventions creates the foundation for sustainability and allows for more effective, connected and tailored solutions to be developed.
- Consciously reviewing and evaluating progress and impact (formally and informally) and feeding this back in to contribute to the work you are doing, as opposed to post-intervention evaluation only, supports in delivering effective results.



About the Institute for Organisational Development (OD)

The Institute for OD is the government approved Institute for the art, science and practice of the field of Organisational Development. It is the professional home for the practitioners and standards of OD in the UK.

The Institute for Organisational Development deliver work in the areas of Research, development Programmes, and OD Consultancy primarily through strategic Membership partnerships with organisations to sustainably improve their performance and wellbeing. It is conscious to use its position to share the Voices of Member organisations and OD practitioners on the areas that are important to them.

For more information on how your organisation could benefit from Strategic Organisational Development with the Institute for Organisational Development, please get in touch at membership@instituteforod.org.uk or call us on 0845 4303 021.





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