



CHAPTER NINETEEN

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE WORLD: A CHALLENGING OD OPPORTUNITY

John D. Adams

Even though many OD professionals are excellent practitioners, they are all operating under the influence of society's prevailing shared mental models. This means they may be contributing to the collapse of a sustainable human presence on the planet. Those mental models generally produce incremental change approaches, which are short-term, reactive, local, either-or, blaming, and doing-and-having-oriented. If OD is practiced within the milieu of these mental models, it will largely be stuck in first-order change efforts. Even the most successful OD practitioners will unwittingly contribute to the growing list of global environmental pressures and economic inequities (Adams, 1992).

The OD profession is in a perfect position to ask questions in order to generate increased versatility in thinking, and to create more long-term, creative, global, and systems-level change efforts that are focused relatively more toward learning and being, all essential qualities for building a sustainable world. It is difficult to change deeply held, habitual patterns of thought, including the prevailing shared mental models as reflected in one's culture. This chapter describes research about these models that necessarily guide individual and collective behaviors within organizations. It is a hypothesis of this chapter that as OD practitioners and their clients learn to think more consciously, and in more versatile (which is to say, appropriately flexible) ways, they are more able to contribute to the growth of sustainable organizational practices.

Twelve change “success factors” are described that can support and facilitate this outcome (Adams, 2003). The second part of this chapter summarizes research into these success factors promoting successful deep-pattern change. This chapter describes an opportunity for organization development professionals to participate in establishing a viable and sustainable world that is rich in life choices, more thoughtful about the use of nonrenewable resources, more careful about the impact of human activity on the environment, and more generative of economic and social justice.

Environmental, social quality of life, and economic processes are rapidly approaching critical interrelated challenges. The pathways society uses now are likely to lead to severely reduced options for an acceptable quality of life in the next one or two generations. It is clear that human activity has a profound effect on the future. What an individual or a group thinks about a situation has a profound influence on behavior. The big question is, Will societies choose to have a conscious effect, or an unconscious one, on the future?

Opportunities and Challenges

The twentieth century was filled with remarkable progress. Humans traveled into space and made every part of the globe accessible. Computers evolved from large, room-filling, stand-alone units to extremely powerful handheld devices with wireless connections to a global network of other such devices—in less than forty years. Diseases have been eradicated, and agricultural advances have kept up with continued population growth (see Adams, 2000; and Meadows, Meadows, and Randers, 1992).

Many severe challenges have also emerged alongside this progress. Thousands of species are being eliminated at a rate unprecedented in history. Pollution of the air, water, and earth is a critical issue everywhere. Grain and fishing production, which peaked in the 1980s, are in steady decline. The climate has warmed significantly, causing rapid loss of polar ice and ever-more-extreme weather events. Civil wars rage continuously, and terrorism has gone “mainstream.” The global economic system continues to make the rich richer and the poor poorer. The population now exceeds six billion and will double every forty to fifty years, with most new births occurring in devastatingly poor (in a Western economic sense) circumstances. Only 15 percent of the world’s population makes ends meet with at least a minimal degree of what people in developed countries consider comfortable.

How can practitioners in OD work more effectively with these challenges and still preserve the many beneficial advances? A first step is for people to pay atten-

tion to their prevailing shared mental models. Albert Einstein expressed the idea on many occasions that “you cannot expect to be able to solve a complex problem using the same manner of thinking that caused the problem” (1933). Learning to think more versatily and consciously makes it possible to treat more than symptoms and allows people to come face-to-face with the underlying problems.

Journalist Marilyn Ferguson, in her talks and seminars, frequently made this statement: “If I continue to believe as I have always believed, I will continue to act as I have always acted. If I continue to act as I have always acted, I will continue to get what I have always gotten” (1980). The self-fulfilling prophecy is always at work and is always in a self-reinforcing mode. For example, someone who is seen to be a good problem solver will always be finding problems to solve. The more problems solved, the more strongly others will believe he or she is a good problem solver, and the more new problems he or she will find.

The late Scottish psychiatrist R. D. Laing suggested that the self-reinforcing and self-fulfilling nature of one’s prevailing mental models occurs mostly in autopilot—outside of a person’s awareness and consciousness—and it is this unaware autopilot that is often the real source of limitation: “The range of what we think and do is limited by what we fail to notice. And because we fail to notice that we fail to notice, there is little we can do to change; until we notice [become conscious of] how failing to notice shapes our thoughts and deeds” (cited in Abrams and Zweig, 1991).

The Brighter the Light, the Darker the Shadow

Selected OD practitioners and corporate managers were asked to identify where their organizations or clients fall, as an average default position, on each of six dimensions (Adams, 2001). The percentages in Figure 19.1 indicate their responses to this question. The largest percentage on each of the six dimensions was in the left third of the continua: short-term, reactive, local, either-or, blaming, and doing-having. On four of the six dimensions, the smallest percentage was in the right third of the continua: long-term, creative, systems, and learning.

Regarding the perceived zones of comfort, or degree of versatility (appropriate flexibility) in thinking along these dimensions, most indicated “narrow,” a few indicated “moderate,” and only three or four indicated “broad.” There is more “left-side” thinking (see Figure 19.1); and regardless of where placed along the six dimensions, the range or versatility of thinking is rather narrow. To summarize the findings, the present shared default mind-set in U.S. businesses is seen to be most often located at or toward the left end of these dimensions, with a rather narrow “zone of comfort” (little variability in thinking) around each.

FIGURE 19.1. CLIENT MENTAL MODELS.

| | Left third | Middle third | Right third | |
|---|--------------------------------|--------------|-------------|---|
| Short-term: Focus on deadlines, immediate priorities, sense of urgency | 72 | 46 | 10 | Long-term: Vision and strategies, potentials, opportunities |
| | <i>Time orientation</i> | | | |
| Reactive: External drives, prevailing rules and procedures | 79 | 33 | 16 | Creative: Taking initiative, new approaches, internal drives |
| | <i>Focus of responsiveness</i> | | | |
| Local: Focus on self or immediate group, competition | 67 | 28 | 33 | Global: Whole organization, inclusive, ecumenical, larger community |
| | <i>Focus of attention</i> | | | |
| Separation: Either-or, specialization | 64 | 35 | 29 | Systems: Both/and, holistic, interrelationships |
| | <i>Prevailing logic</i> | | | |
| Blaming: Self-protection, it's not my fault (don't get caught) | 57 | 43 | 28 | Learning: Understanding, building on all types of experience |
| | <i>Problem consideration</i> | | | |
| Doing-Having: Materialism, greed, cost effectiveness, financial performance, quantitative growth | 62 | 32 | 34 | Being: Having enough, self-realization, "greater good," intangibles valued, qualitative growth |
| | <i>Life orientation</i> | | | |

Note: Responses ($N = 128$) of OD practitioners' assessment of their clients' (externals) and organizations' (internals) prevailing autopilot mental models.

When groups of managers are asked to describe scenarios for the future if organizations collectively continue to reflect these left-side mental models (and the behaviors these mental models generate) into the future, the responses have always resulted in gloomy scenarios. There is unanimous agreement when the manager groups are asked if these default mind-sets are driving the major ecological, social, and economic challenges around the world.

What can one expect from the OD profession if practitioners do an impeccable job and are successful, while operating in environments in which these mental models prevail? If an OD practitioner's daily efforts are focused on short cycles and working ever faster to do more with less, is not that person's effort primarily going to add pressure to the growing systems of challenges? Thus the title of this section: the brighter the OD work, when carried out from within the prevailing mental models, the darker the results, when viewed from a big-picture, long-time-frame perspective.

What would happen if a critical mass of the population shifted their mental model defaults significantly toward the right side of the scale and generated wider zones of comfort? Would society create the kind of future people say they really want? Would individuals bring their lives into better balance? This scenario represents a tremendous opportunity for OD professionals to help people become more aware of prevailing mental models and then facilitate culture change, knowing that shared prevailing mental models are a core part of an organization's culture and thus the collective behavior.

Mental models are able to protect themselves from change and usually operate on a kind of autopilot. Humans are presumably the only species with the capacity to think about how they think. Most of the time, however, people don't engage this capacity and instead reinforce their outlook on life by repeating the same thoughts day after day (Harman, 1988). To become responsible, a person must develop conscious, versatile thought processes and move from autopilot to awareness to choice. Society has done a reasonably good job of preparing for the future technologically. It still has a long way to go to prepare psychologically and emotionally for a better future.

Autopilot Consequences

In the workplace, extensive business plans are created regularly; but they are frequently given little further attention and often remain unimplemented. In addition, there are many contemporary and historic examples of low-integrity, questionable ethics in the areas of business, finance, government, and even child care. When it comes to the environment, relatively few organizations voluntarily restrict themselves in toxic emissions and solid waste disposal, and where regulations do exist minimum compliance (or finding loopholes) are often the norm. It is still the exceptional organization that engages in developing quality of life in the community in which it operates.

At the individual level, relatively few people feel they are personally responsible for their situation in life. Taking personal responsibility for other than personal

economic gain, though increasing, is still not widespread. It seems few people realize how small and endangered the world has “become,” and even fewer recognize the things each person can do daily to alleviate, in a small way, some of the larger challenges to the earth. (The word *world* is used here to designate the social-economic-political systems of humanity, and *earth* to designate the natural ecological system in which the world resides.)

Are people by nature self-destructive? Do people generally not care if the environment continues to be degraded until vast tracts become uninhabitable? Are people unconcerned about the legacy that society appears to be leaving its grandchildren? Do people really think that their lifestyle habits won't have any consequences? For most people, the answer is no to each question; yet the pressures continue to grow. The reason for this contradiction lies in the fundamental processes of thinking—in the mental models learned early in life and reinforced by everyday activities throughout life. With continuous, totally normal repetition and reinforcement, each person gradually develops an outlook that is persistent and operates (generates predictable behaviors) for the most part outside his or her awareness.

However, it is only through conscious choice that a person can develop a mind-set that is more versatile and flexible. Developing a set of mental models that is broad and versatile is a key ingredient if society in general, and OD in particular, are to address the growing worldwide environmental and social challenges effectively. Teaching conscious choice at all levels of education is a critical component of this solution (Adams, 2000). Meanwhile, OD professionals can promote versatility in thought in their practices in the workplace. Years of experience have demonstrated that versatility in consciousness is essential for ongoing individual learning and that the only sustainable consciousness is a continuously learning consciousness.

Reprogramming an autopilot set of mental models requires the same processes that established them in the first place: repeating messages and experiences (Adams, 2003). Left to itself, the human mind will attempt to maintain its present state; repetition of new ideas and intentions must be carried out consciously. New structures or mechanisms that guarantee a sufficient number of new repetitions may be necessary to get beyond the status quo protection efforts of the old autopilot.

It is easiest to change one default message at a time. A wholesale change of one's consciousness, a complete personal transformation, is possible and sometimes happens; but step-by-step change is probably going to be a lot easier for most people to assimilate. Tables 19.1 and 19.2 (from Adams, 2001) offer guidance on how to increase versatility in mental models through raised awareness of them and use of questions to broaden perspectives and increase versatility of thought. These tables can be helpful in strategy-planning and coaching sessions.

TABLE 19.1. WORKING WITH LEFT-SIDE FOCUSES.

| Focus | Messages That Reinforce This Focus | Questions to Bring Focus Here | The Positive Value of Focusing Here | The Result of Overuse of This Focus |
|--------------|--|---|--|--|
| Short-term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't fix it if it ain't broke. • Just do it. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What needs attention now? • What are your immediate priorities? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing priorities • Acting with efficiency | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lose the big picture. • Overlook long-term consequences. • Put bandages on symptoms. |
| Reactive | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do as you're told. • If it feels good, do it. • Life's a bitch and then you die. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the established policy, procedure, or practice? • What has been done before in this kind of situation? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistency • Responsiveness • Loyalty | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stuck in a rut • Unable to flow with change |
| Local | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look out for Number One. • You've got to expect that from a ____! | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What makes you different or unique? • What is special about this situation? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survival • Protection • Maintaining position | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of perspective • Ethnocentrism • Loss of diversity |
| Separation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The best way to understand it is to take it apart. • A place for everything, and everything in its place. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the relevant facts in this situation? • What do you get when you crunch the numbers? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convergence • Specialization • Rationality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fragmentation • Low synergy • Get lost in minutiae |
| Blaming | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's not my fault! • All right, who's to blame here? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your reasons for your actions? • What's wrong with this picture? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judgment, law, and rule enforcement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Win-lose polarization • Risk aversion |
| Doing-Having | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What's in it for me? • Faster, cheaper, better! | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the most cost-effective thing to do? • What's the bottom line? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial performance and material comforts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attachment to possessions • Loss of human sensitivity • Burnout |

TABLE 19.2. WORKING WITH RIGHT-SIDE FOCUSES.

| Focus | Messages That Reinforce This Focus | Questions to Bring Focus Here | The Positive Value of Focusing Here | The Result of Overuse of This Focus |
|-----------|---|---|--|---|
| Long-term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a vision. • Plan ahead. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you anticipate? • Where are we headed? • Where do we want to go? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipation • Prediction • Possibilities • Contingencies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lose timely responsiveness • Ignore pressing realities |
| Creative | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take responsibility for yourself. • You can be anything you want to be. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a different or better approach? • What would you do about this situation if you had a magic wand? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovation • New ideas • New directions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overlook proven processes • Reinvent the wheel |
| Global | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at the big picture. • Let's think about the consequences of this decision. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What's best for the organization as a whole? • How can you make a difference in the world? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive view • Inclusiveness • Value of diversity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Idealism • Loss of initiative or drive • Inattention to detail |
| Systems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solving one problem almost always creates others. • The whole is more than the sum of its parts. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are the key stakeholders? • If we take this action, what consequences can we predict? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divergent • Holistic • Finding key interrelationships | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equate models to reality • Get lost in the clouds of complexity or theory |
| Learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let one who is without sin cast the first stone. • Here's another learning and growth opportunity. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What can you learn from this experience? • How might you benefit from letting go of that grudge? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ease of exploration • Seeking growth and learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be taken advantage of • Self-sacrificing • Loss of discipline |
| Being | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You'll never walk alone. • Trust the process. • As ye sow, so shall ye reap. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What really matters in your life? • What does your "higher self" say about this? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-realization • "Greater good" point of view | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become ungrounded • Lose touch with main stream |

The Responsibilities of the Dominant Institution

Until about four hundred years ago, before the days of Galileo, Copernicus, and Newton, the church was the dominant institution in Western society and took responsibility for all aspects of human experience within its sphere of influence. The Holy Roman Empire ruled most of what we know as Europe, and the pope was more or less responsible for everything within the realm.

Mythologist Joseph Campbell has taught that the dominant institution in a society tends to build the tallest buildings; the churches' cathedral spires towered over the landscape in those days. After the "Copernican revolution," however, national governments rapidly became the dominant institutions in the West, and government buildings defined the peaks in the urban skyline. Government leaders (first genealogically determined and then elected) took responsibility for all aspects of the human experience. Federal government buildings were soon taller than the church steeples.

Today it is obvious which institution has the tallest buildings. The financial system now defines the urban skyline worldwide, and the practice of business has become the dominant activity just about everywhere. To date, however, business has taken responsibility first for its own short-term profitability (shareholder interest) and only a little energy, if any, is invested into the larger concerns of the community. The current practice of business, with its focus on short-cycle profitability, calls into question whether or not it is even possible for business to assume this wider responsibility (Daly and Cobb, 1991; Hawken, 1993).

However, business still expects government to be responsible for human activities and experiences that do not directly flow to their bottom line. Business also expects government to keep up the infrastructure and ensure that all supportive nonbusiness systems are functioning well. Governments maintain military forces in large part to protect economic activities. But when the government tries to protect the environment, sometimes causing businesses increased costs, many business leaders look for loopholes or attempt to have the laws changed in ways that will be more favorable to short-term corporate net profits.

The business section of every U.S. newspaper these days is a review of companies' stock market performance. More than 95 percent of all financial transactions now involve speculation, with the equivalent of the annual GDP of the entire planet (a measure of the sale of goods and services) passing through Wall Street every three weeks. Financial security is dependent on the collective psyche of those who are playing the market and living out the last days of the doing-and-having "greed paradigm." The rich are getting richer at an alarming rate. In the early 1990s, the average discrepancy between the annual income of a *Fortune 500* CEO and an entry-level employee in the same organization was estimated at 157 to 1.

Now, ten years later, figures of more than 500 to 1 appear regularly in business magazines and newspaper business sections. In 2003, for example, average CEO compensation in the United States increased dramatically—while the country was still recovering from a recession.

Despite last year's loud cries for reform, plenty of boards are still paying their CEOs like it's 1999. That's the message from our analysis of 2003 CEO pay, conducted with the help of Equilar, an independent provider of compensation data in San Mateo, Calif. The median CEO compensation at the 363 Fortune 500 companies that had filed their proxies by April 7 was \$7.1 million—2.6% higher than last year's median. Among the very biggest companies—those in the Fortune 100—median pay was nearly twice that: \$12.2 million. Granted, Fortune 500 profits were five times larger in 2003 than in 2002. But let's not forget how high 2002 pay was. That year the average U.S. CEO earned 282 times what the average worker did, a survey shows. In 1982 the ratio was 42 to 1 [Boyle, 2004].

Senior executives of publicly traded companies are awarded huge bonuses and are often able to buy shares of company stock at a reduced rate. It is not unusual for key corporate decisions to be made solely on the basis of the likely impact on share price (and therefore on the immediate net worth of the executive making the decision), rather than giving first consideration to longer-term concerns such as the likely impact of the decision on the environment.

To be fair, many large business organizations around the world now recognize the need for environmental restraint and so maintain compliance with regulations intended to protect the environment. This, however, frequently does not go far enough, because the regulations themselves are rooted in some unsustainable and as yet largely untested assumptions: that they can somehow find a way to go on growing indefinitely, and that doing a little better than we have in the past will be sufficient. Most businesses won't, or can't, go beyond compliance unless there is a "business case" for doing so—that is, steps taken to prevent or mitigate environmental issues must also lead to increased profitability.

Evidence of Progress

A growing number of companies have already demonstrated that caring for the environment as a corporate policy can indeed be supported by a "business case" for doing so. Interface Carpets (<http://www.interfacesustainability.com/>) has be-

come a benchmark company in the carpeting industry in this regard. Energy companies have formed the International Petroleum Industry Environmental Conservation Association, which in turn has produced a report of energy company accomplishments to date on a dozen dimensions of sustainability (www.ipieca.org/downloads/WSSD.pdf). The number of corporations choosing to engage in sustainable business practices is growing rapidly worldwide (www.ftse4good.com/./ftse4good/index.jsp).

The emerging paradigm is now leading to businesses that naturally move beyond compliance to anticipation and prevention of ecological and social degradations, and then even further to ecological and social “capacity building,” as their natural modes of operating. The challenge everyone faces ultimately is whether or not this evolutionary development of perspective (or consciousness) will occur rapidly enough to create the kind of future people would describe as ideal for their own grandchildren. There are increasing signs that fundamental transformations are under way. Among the presumed positive trends are the emergence of a single, global economy and marketplace, enormous technological advancement, and instantaneous global communications.

Additional signs that change is coming appear to be less positive: ongoing degradation of the natural environment; a rapidly widening gap between rich and poor as wealth concentrates among fewer and fewer people; and increasing worldwide unemployment, underemployment, and homelessness (for details and research reports, see the Worldwatch Institute’s annually published *State of the World* books).

The future state of the world (and the earth) will depend on how these trends unfold, along with the likely emergence of new trends and unexpected surprises. Whatever the future, business practices will have a strong influence on quality of life everywhere in the world in the twenty-first century. Decline into chaos is in no way ensured, nor is a smooth slide into some utopian state.

One opportunity for OD is to evolve a larger focus for its application. Before too many more years, a “transorganizational, transformational” community of practice will emerge drawing on the fundamental skills and knowledge developed by OD practitioners in the past four or five decades (Adams, 2000). The perspectives will shift from internal “organizational behavior” to the interface between organizations and the larger community; and from relatively short-term focused improvement strategies to long-term realization of worthy societal outcomes.

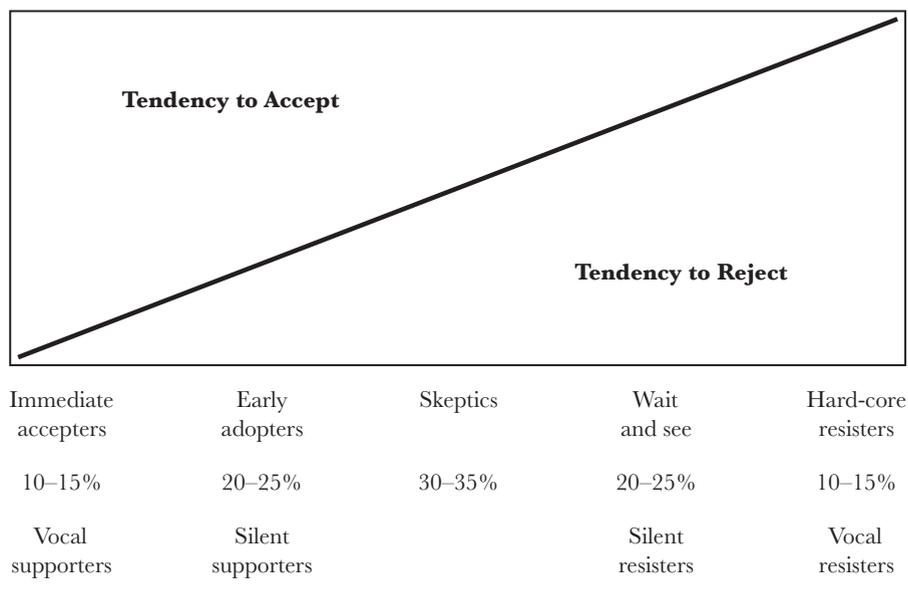
Will OD people be in the vanguard of this emerging practice area? To date there is relatively little evidence on which to base such a prediction (Adams, 1992, 1994). There are relatively few OD practitioners involved in the sustainability programs that are currently under way, and people not trained in OD are reinventing the field to address the needs they are finding as they implement their sustainability programs.

Building Critical Mass for Change

When attempting to influence a group or an organization, it is often better to influence the “easiest” people first, rather than following the more natural tendency to focus on the biggest resisters. When 25 percent or so of a population is steadfastly committed to a change, the change is likely to occur. If change efforts are focused instead on the hard-core resisters, the less obvious resisters may well join forces with them, creating a vocal critical mass against the change.

As portrayed in Figure 19.2 (Adams, 1988), this chapter recommends that our work on raising awareness about the larger concerns voiced here be focused on those who are ready to listen, and that these people receive lots of attention and support. At the same time, OD practitioners should avoid alienating those who think there is nothing to worry about—or that it isn’t their organization’s responsibility—in terms of environmental degradation and social and economic injustice. In other words, preach to the choir, call frequent choir practice, and recruit people to join the choir when they start humming along! An important role for OD is placing a priority on helping the early adopters become aware of their prevailing mental models, and then on facilitating the emergence of more versatile ways of thinking.

FIGURE 19.2. BUILDING CRITICAL MASS FOR CHANGE.



Leaders of change efforts on all levels, from stimulating individual lifestyle or habit changes to implementing large-scale organizational changes, know that the percentage of completely successful change projects is low. Similarly, Beer (Beer and Nohria, 2000) and Maurer (1996) have found that most change efforts either fall short or fail altogether. Maurer suggests that a majority of organizational change efforts fail in their early stages because of insufficient buy-in.

Why this low incidence of full success? What does it take to achieve successful change? Those who have been successful can offer some clues to their success. A series of interviews with individuals and organizational groups that have successfully completed change projects reveals themes that recur in every story. This research has found eight qualities that are almost invariably present when individuals make successful habit pattern changes, and four additional qualities (all twelve are essential) once organizational groups have completed successful changes. Stories about individual and organizational failures were also collected, and they led to the conclusion that most or all of the twelve change success factors were missing if the change results fell short of the original goals (see Adams, 2003, for a more complete description of this study).

Individual Change Success Factors

1. *Understanding and acceptance of the need for change.* A person must understand a recommended change and think there's a need for it. Without this understanding and acceptance, a person won't be enthusiastic about making the change, whether individually or organizationally. Without enthusiasm, change is not a priority.

2. *Belief that the change is both desirable and possible.* If the change is seen as impossible to undertake, or not the right thing to do, then it will not get full attention. If this judgment prevails, the person resists attempts to engage with the change process.

3. *Sufficient passionate commitment.* Changing habits—especially habits of thinking (mental models)—is difficult. To stay the course requires a strong commitment to being successful. In organizations, there seems to be a need for a critical mass (conventional wisdom suggests 25 percent) of people to hold a heartfelt commitment to making the change a success (see nine and eleven below).

4. *A specific deliverable or goal and a few first steps.* Even when change is seen as necessary, desirable, and possible and there is commitment to it, a person needs a clear picture of the goal and a doable first step to build momentum. Though no one mentioned following a plan, everyone in a successful effort knew the outcomes they were committed to and what they were going to do next.

5. *Structures or mechanisms that require repetition of the new pattern.* Habits reach autopilot status through repetition. When a new habit is needed, there are few

repetitions of this new behavior in the new habit's memory account and a great many repetitions of the old behavior in the outgoing habit's memory account. To reinforce repetition of the new behavior, mechanisms or structures need to be created that require practicing the new behavior. An example of a reinforcing mechanism is regular use of a set of provocative questions such as those in Exhibit 19.1 (at the end of this list), in individual reflection or as a part of a dialogue group. These questions may also be used in coaching situations.

6. *Feeling supported and safe.* Many argue that people do not resist change *per se*; people resist the unknown. Those intent on making change are more willing to dive into the unknown if they feel they are in a safe environment. Having a support network with unconditional acceptance is important to successful deep personal change. Culture (shared mental model habits) change in the workplace is more difficult when job security is in doubt.

7. *Versatility of mental models.* If your only tool is a hammer, then everything becomes a nail! Because autopilot mental models are most often limited in scope and flexibility, deep pattern change becomes very difficult. Successful significant change, individually and organizationally, is more likely to happen if the scope of thinking reflects long-range, deep, and self-reflective perspectives. Versatility means an appropriate amount of flexibility in how one mentally holds a situation (see Tables 19.1 and 19.2).

8. *Patience and perseverance.* Establishing change takes time and effort. Most often there is progress and then there is backsliding. To hang in there, a sense of patience and a drive to be persistent are essential. As has already been noted, many repetitions of the new habit must be added to the account. Patience and perseverance ensure frequent repetition of the required new behaviors.

Additional Change Success Factors for Organizational Changes

The eight factors just listed are almost always present in both successful individual habit changes and organizational culture changes; the next four are almost always *additionally* present in successful organizational changes that include significant organizational culture change (shared mental models and shared behaviors).

9. *Clear accountability—visible, vocal, consistent, persistent sponsors and stakeholders.* The absence of clear accountabilities for implementing and sustaining organizational change was a frequent reason for falling short of change goals. When employees see sponsors and stakeholders engaged and accountable in no uncertain terms, then there is greater success. This is related to sufficient passionate commitment (factor three above). Do key change leaders regularly demonstrate their unambiguous commitment to the success of the change?

10. *Explicit “boundary management” regarding the role of other people.* Every change has identifiable boundaries around it. People at the boundary line of a significant change need to be considered carefully. Are they resources to be engaged? Might they become stakeholders in the foreseeable future? Do they need to be kept informed? Is it advisable to keep them out of the way? Open systems analysis and planning appear to be highly important to key relationships at the boundary of the change.

11. *Critical mass in alignment.* Conventional wisdom is that when 25–30 percent of the members of a system overtly support an idea (visibly, vocally, consistently, and persistently), success is inevitable. If this percentage is valid, then there is a race of sorts involved here. To be successful in complex organizational change requires developing an aligned support base of 25–30 percent of those affected, faster than developing a critical mass of those in opposition to the desired change. Early-adopter models (Adams, 1988) tell us that for any significant change we can count on starting out with 10–15 percent of the affected population being supportive and another 10–15 percent being equally antagonistic toward it. Whichever end of the new idea adoption continuum doubles in size first is likely to win out. This suggests that it is important to focus primary attention on those in favor and encourage the next level of accepters to join in, rather than trying to fix the hard-core resisters’ “erroneous stance”—which may only drive the skeptics into more vocal resistance.

12. *Reward the new behavior and withdraw rewards for the old behavior.* This factor should be self-evident, but it is often overlooked by change leaders. “You get what you pay for” is true. If a change goal includes enhancing teamwork but annual bonuses continue to reward “individual heroics,” then teamwork will suffer when opportunities for individual achievement are present.

EXHIBIT 19.1. SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR BUILDING VERSATILITY

Questions for Dialogue and Contemplation

- What can I do today to further positive change? Am I currently doing the right things to help build a sustainable tomorrow?
- What would be better terms than *growth* and *sustainability*?
- How do we learn to shift from “us versus them” to “we’re all in this together”?
- How can organizations learn to incorporate more long-term, big-picture thinking?
- How do I maintain my awareness of the growing global challenges and not get so overwhelmed that I turn off and go back to business as usual?
- How do we overcome widespread greediness and belief in scarcity?
- If the corporations in my community grow at an average annual rate of 3 percent (or 5 percent, 10 percent, 15 percent), what will be the impact on resources, waste, community life, and the local environment?

(Continued)

EXHIBIT 19.1. SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR BUILDING VERSATILITY, Cont'd

- How can we reconcile short-term needs of having jobs that help businesses grow, when this does not appear to be sustainable in the long run?
 - How can I help my organization take a more global, long-term view?
 - How can we influence organizations to consider questions of future impact?
 - How can we bring more attention to emerging external challenges into the everyday operations of organizations?
 - How can we better reward integrity and ethical practice at work?
 - What support systems are needed for organizations of all kinds to find meaning beyond the bottom line?
 - How do we get the attention of the CEOs and other key decision makers?
 - How can we help business leaders connect directly with people outside their direct business sphere—especially children or the elderly?
 - Is sustainable consciousness even possible in an organization in crisis? Is survival possible without sustainable consciousness?
 - How can we link organizational incentives to activities that promote sustainable consciousness?
 - How do we distinguish between “good people” and “bad systems”?
 - What can I do to remember the physical environment in every decision I make?
 - How can we speak for the poor if we don't know any poor people?
 - Will I ever be able to feel secure in my work life again?
 - What is the maximum population the earth can sustain—for centuries and centuries—at a decent standard of living?
 - How can we make more conscious connections between global challenges and local actions?
-

Summary

Most people, most of the time, in U.S. organizations, operate from a set of shared prevailing mental models that encourage only first-order changes and focus on fast results and financial priorities. If OD is practiced under the influence of these shared prevailing mental models, successful practitioners will unwittingly contribute to an unsustainable situation for society and the environment. The better the OD work, the greater influence it has and the greater the challenges when viewed from a long-range systems perspective. The field of OD has an opportunity to face these challenges of sustainability; but practitioners of OD must be aware of their own prevailing mental models and take steps to increase their versatility of thinking. They need to make working with the mental models of their

clients (awareness and then choice for greater versatility) a priority whenever possible, especially in the coaching, mentoring, and strategy-planning arenas. This newly emerging community of practice will draw on OD skills and knowledge, but it will have transorganizational and transformational perspectives.

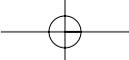
At present, there are a rapidly growing number of companies making commitments to environmental sustainability and increased social responsibility. These programs, by and large, are being implemented with little or no OD involvement—and the implementation and planning skills that are second-nature to OD practitioners are being reinvented by others in the absence of OD presence. This represents a huge opportunity for OD practitioners to get involved, and also an opportunity for professional development and academic programs to provide the education and training that is needed to support these programs.

The difficult task of changing mental models requires changing deeply held habitual patterns. Research reveals twelve success factors for changing individual and collective habit patterns, which can serve as a checklist for making successful and enduring changes in how OD practitioners think and in how their clients think.

Using the dialogue and meditation questions in Exhibit 19.1 can facilitate emergence of more versatile thinking processes. Attempting to hold significant positive conversation among people who hold differing worldviews is extremely difficult. Another huge opportunity for OD practitioners is to facilitate dialogues for groups with differing worldviews (for example, the economic paradigm and the ecological paradigm), intended to promote mutual understanding and to prevent win-lose or right-wrong discussions.

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