

Our Philosophy

The meaning of Organizational Development (OD)

Our philosophy of Organizational Development is crafted by our founder, Robert P Crosby, but perhaps best summed up by Dr. W. Warner Burke. He stated that, "To be Organizational Development it must (1) respond to an actual and perceived need for change on the part of the client, (2) involve the client in the planning and implementation of the change, and (3) lead to change in the organization's culture." Further, Dr. Burke went on to write that, "...*organizational development is a process of fundamental change in an organization's culture*. By fundamental change, as opposed to fixing a problem or improving a procedure, I mean that some significant aspect of a culture will never be the same."

How authority works in all organizations

Robert P Crosby was heavily influenced by two seminal thinkers in the twentieth century: Kurt Lewin (1890-1947) and John Dewey (1859-1952). Not only did he study their work, but he also was trained by Goodwin Watson, a colleague of John Dewey, and had a 29-year mentorship and colleagueship with Ronald Lippitt (starting in 1957), one of Kurt Lewin's top graduate students. Both Dewey and Lewin believed that democracy is a learned behavior. Further, it is more difficult to learn than either autocracy or permissive styles of leadership. That is, all employees already know how to behave under an autocratic leader. The continuum of this behavior, depending on their work culture, will be to either fall in line passively or find ways to sabotage the direction.

Employees also adapt to permissive environments. In them, bosses often become indirect and ineffective. This can easily result in the traps of asking permission for the smallest of actions and in a failure to implement even important changes. Rather than trying to direct others, the path of least resistance for some becomes "unless I do it myself, the work won't get done." On the other hand, some supervisors may try to overcome the environment by being inappropriately autocratic, or "tough." The most predictable result of this is a backlash against the supervisor, rather than inspiring appropriate dialogue about the dilemma of trying to lead in a permissive environment. Because of these dynamics, permissive environments are ironically a breeding ground for passivity and conflicts that are left unresolved, the very problems they are designed to avoid.

In autocratic environments large problems and conflicts often get resolved by bosses mandating "the fix," thus dis-empowering employees and decreasing their ability to manage issues and/or execute solutions. Everyone has ideas about their work, and the inability to act on at least some of those ideas kills discretionary effort. Even worse, solid practical solutions from the workforce get lost. The inability to act can happen in both autocratic and permissive environments. Furthermore, in both environments bosses tend to let conflicts linger between people and departments and do not give the oversight and support that could help them begin to build the competencies necessary for effective resolution. The art of leadership is to be able to tread the middle between these extremes in order to drive direction and ownership throughout the organization. This, however, takes commitment to learning which includes education, skill practice, and persistence.

When Dewey and Lewin use the word democracy, they mean managing between the extremes of autocracy and permissiveness. The dilemma with the word "democracy" is that when asked to do it, most people act it out in a permissive way. This parallels a problem first learned about by Crosby in conversations with Dr. Lippitt about his late 30's classic study of authority in boy's

groups (with R. K. White and conducted under Lewin's guidance). Lippitt told him that he, himself, took over the democratic role because some who were asked to do so behaved permissively. That is why one sees the young Ron Lippitt himself on the classic black and white film. From here Crosby started working inside of organizations with an eye on how leaders were using their authority to accomplish their goals. He has spent his life helping organizations learn how to manage from the middle. Plus, he has led several recovery efforts from poorly planned experiments of moving towards autonomous work teams. What follows is his unique theory of authority in systems.

In a nut shell it is this: *Authority exists in all systems*. Pretend it does not by trying to take away all supervisors and it will still emerge. If a group has no formal boss followers and leaders will still fall into place, but at random (a good example of this, although extreme, is the novel, "Lord of the Flies"). Furthermore, don't kid yourself that a self-managed team has no boss. The layers above are still responsible for the team's performance. If a leaderless group is failing, they will either be corrected from above or they will drag the organization's performance down with them.

Rather than creating a vacuum of authority by eliminating supervisors or bosses, we think it is better to focus on creating clarity about authority of who can decide what, and to encourage dialogue about work issues upward and downward. This needs to be done in each intact work group (boss and direct reports) as well as cross-functionally. In fact, think of clarifying authority as an ongoing task with no end, and with adjustments made as situations change. It should happen at all levels, with the people closest to the work given the ability to make fast decisions so that effective work gets done. In other words, delegate authority as much as possible with clarity about who decides and how they will be monitored.

Further, *don't be driven by an ideology*. The often repeated error here is to immediately (sometimes behind the guise of a new program) move every group from authoritarian leadership to permissive as if all are the same. We recommend an evolutionary approach that takes into account the uniqueness of each group/crew and recognizes that some will work better with a more directive style, while some groups can be more successful working with little direction as long as goals and accountability are clear. All of our business books highlight the folly of permissiveness as manifested in the notion of self-managed teams. We think the same of authoritarianism.

Finally, *this is a journey without an end*. As people become more capable they need more decision authority in order for the organization to be as productive as possible, but always with clarity and accountability. Newer employees with little experience, of course, need more direction (as nicely modeled by Hersey and Blanchard's "Situational Leadership").

Let your employees have as much freedom as you can, but never do it suddenly without clarity in a way that creates chaos and power struggles. Authority is! It is not good, bad, right, or wrong. When an organization creates a vacuum by trying to eliminate supervisors, authority will arise in the workforce sometimes for better but far too often for worse. It's too important to leave to chance! Effective organizations are honest about authority and continually strive to find balance. Having real authority to act is a critical component of creating employee ownership. The goal is for managers to give the employees maximum influence including appropriate delegation so that work can be accomplished with quality and on time. Yet managers must stay in touch with the results and quality of the work. Therefore, simple ways to monitor and continually assess whether the business objectives are being achieved are critical components of delegation and are often, ironically, overlooked.

Employee Engagement

The paradox of employee engagement is that unless you are clear about authority, and can manage from the middle of the extremes of autocratic and permissive leadership, then you will

not get real engagement. Culture change towards the middle of the extremes is our quest. This is not for idealistic reasons, but rather because the middle path reliably results in higher ownership by the employees and, perhaps even more importantly, increased performance as measured by business metrics. Our interventions, from large group to small, are carefully crafted to instill that balance.

We encourage everyone in a system, from the managers to the people who do the day to day tasks, to surface problems and solutions. We train management to field all issues with respect, and to nurture the seeds of openness, even when the messenger is less than perfect in their delivery. We understand that to really thrive, you must engage the bulk of your employees. To engage them effectively, you must be able to create the proper balance of management authority.

Emotional Intelligence (EQ)

In 1953 at Boston University, our founder stumbled across a social invention just six years in the making when he participated in his first T-Group. That invention, by Kurt Lewin (with Lippitt, Leland Bradford, and Ken Benne) in 1947, was the realization that people learn much faster and deeper if they receive feedback immediately and are then given the chance to act on that feedback. Further, such 'here and now' experience expands learning beyond the cognitive domain and embraces the emotional (affective) and the skill (motoric) domain. Sports coaches know that in order to improve performance players must practice what they are trying to improve, but that is still a new discovery for many in education. This led to T-groups which were originally called Basic Skill Training Groups. This new way of learning was so engaging to Crosby that he began a life-long journey to use and refine the tool to help leaders and people from all walks of life learn how to have more choice of behaviors in any situation.

Since 1953 Crosby has reformed and revived the process. In 1986 a colleague, Dr. Ron Short, introduced the practice of having an inside and outside group with the outside group observing and focusing the skill of describing behavior (as opposed to giving judgments). That focus is essential in training managers and hourly workers. T-Groups, sometimes called by names like encounter or sensitivity, went through many variations and have had some dark times. For instance, they became a fad in the 60's and 70's. Many started to lead them with little or no formal training. This led to poorly run sessions that pushed participants to share personal/private stories in order to try and "fix" them. Such self-disclosure, like a loose form of group therapy, in an appropriate safe environment with the right people could be useful. Unfortunately in organizations it was devastating for enough of the participants and their work relationships to give T-Groups a bad name. Instead of self-disclosure, we use T-Groups for their original purpose, to help participants learn about themselves in the present moment (not the past), with heavy emphasis on learning through your experience with others (both how you are impacting others and how they impact you), focusing on the interaction between people, and building the skills to better communicate in tense situations.

Crosby always knew he had to keep standards in his trainings. Also, he knew that what he was teaching helped people better understand their emotions, become choice makers in different situations, and tune into others during difficult moments. What he didn't know was that in the 1980's a man named Daniel Goleman would coin the phrase "Emotional Intelligence" or EQ and start doing extensive research on the topic.

In 1969 Crosby founded the Leadership Institute (LIOS) that developed, in 1973, into a Graduate program in the Applied Behavioral Sciences based on his experience in this type of learning as well as his years of helping organizations achieve business results. The T-group was at the heart of the program. The Institute has now become the LIOS Graduate College of

Saybrook University. Crosby also used a T-group learning process within organizations which eventually became known as “Tough Stuff” or, as it is often also titled, “EQ in the workplace.”

Tough Stuff is an experientially based EQ training where theory and practice are intertwined. We have trained thousands, including both union and non-union employees, front-line and mid-managers, and top managers (CEO's, Plant managers, V.P's, etc.), often at the same time in the same group. In those sessions, real current vexing issues are faced with skilled facilitative help.

The following is part of our normal advertisement for Tough Stuff:

”Tough Stuff is a unique and powerful approach to self-development. The methodology intertwines short interactive lectures, opportunities for introspection, and learning from unscripted interaction with the other participants and the faculty. The result for the vast majority of participants is immediate and lasting, building a foundation for learning from one’s interactions throughout life. To achieve this, Tough Stuff focuses on the three core capacities of EQ:

- Self-Reflection or awareness
- How I manage interactions with others
- The ability to tune into others.

The exciting thing about EQ is that unlike IQ, EQ is learned and can be increased throughout your lifetime. EQ gets established through the early interactions you had with your primary caregivers. These interactions create your unique patterns of managing relationships and get solidified in the initial wiring of your brain as neural pathways. Although these patterns are learned they are deeply ingrained. However, there is a wealth of new research about the brain that suggests that once your brain finishes with its initial development, around 25 years of age, it remains partially fluid (scientists like to use the word "neuroplasticity"). With guidance and clear intention you can essentially rewire yourself, discarding or diminishing unwanted habits while establishing new and more effective patterns of interaction. This is especially possible in a social (group) learning environment, which is one reason why the Tough Stuff workshop gets such reliable results.

Study after study has shown Emotional Intelligence (EQ) to be more of a predictor of success than IQ. Tough Stuff is a training that can help one clarify and increase those capacities...”

All change in any system is at its heart an emotional experience. Increasing EQ is part and parcel of effectively managing an organization.

Systems Theory in organizations

Organizations are complex with many boundaries, formal and informal hierarchies, unique circumstances, and an infinite variety of human beings. That is the beauty and challenge of OD. In a blend of science and art, we utilize several core systems theories to inform our work.

The first is Kurt Lewin's Field Theory, succinctly formulated as $B=F(P, E)$, meaning that behavior is a function of the person and the environment. This bridges the early 20th Century conflict between psychology and sociology. In the work arena, when you move a manager or a worker to a new group, s/he will almost always begin to conform to the expected behaviors in that group. That is why work with intact groups is essential in cultural change. Chapter 4 of our founder’s first OD book, “Walking the Empowerment Tightrope,” is about Lewin’s formula and its application to the workplace.

The second core theory is called Family Systems. We are especially influenced by the work of Murray Bowen and Edwin Friedman, as well as Virginia Satir, Salvador Minuchin, and Donald

Williamson. Some key concepts are healthy boundaries (versus too strict or too loose), an individual's problem as a symptom of something else awry in the system, self-differentiation, the emotional field (which especially drives behavior in tense moments), homeostasis (and its role in keeping systems stuck), the system as having the capability to solve its own problems (given the proper structure), and common dysfunctional patterns of behavior (such as blame).

The third systems theory is called Sponsor/Agent/Target/Advocate (SATA), originally formulated by Darryl Conner, but altered and enhanced by Crosby & Associates. It is an analysis tool that helps identify key people and roles that must support each other in order for successful work or change to get done. All of the books we have published incorporate SATA, but most thoroughly, in "Solving the Cross-Work Puzzle." If your organization is struggling to implement effectively or is marred by inter-departmental conflict, then you are likely missing the application of SATA to your workplace.

Though not a systems theory, it would be remiss for us to not mention the work of John Wallen. His precision about communication and his skill exercises permeate all of our books and our work. Like no one else, Wallen emphasized "behavior description." Without that skill of specificity, feedback is reduced to judgments about the other and endless blaming.

His "Interpersonal Gap" is an interpersonal systems theory that turns communication "upside down" in that it helps those who comprehend it to realize that:

- 1) The receiver of the communication, not the giver, holds most of the keys towards resolving any confusion arising in the conversation.
- 2) I create my own emotions based on my interpretations of your actions. You don't "make me feel" - I do!
- 3) My unique interpretations of the other (responding to words, gestures, face, and tone), sometimes leads to my misunderstanding the other. I don't know the other "by their actions," but by my interpretation which is often (especially in tense moments) different from their intentions. Wallen claims that more than 50% of all conflicts come from this gap in understanding.
- 4) Until I profoundly comprehend this, I will live a lot of my life as a victim pointing my finger elsewhere as I search for answers to repeated communication dilemmas.

The above theories are at the core of what we do.

Accountability

Crosby also helped to clarify the components of accountability in systems. Two emphases of his, By-whens and Single Point Accountability (SPA), are the critical components of committing to action. In Chapter Three of his book, "Solving the Cross-Work Puzzle," he states, "There is no commitment to action without a date for accomplishment being recorded" (p. 57).

Simply stated, Single Point Accountability means having one person accountable, not a pair or a group (no matter how many others are involved in *completing* the task). Crosby addresses two types of SPA. The first is accountability for a project. This is a project manager who is responsible for monitoring progress on a cross-functional work force in order to achieve the task. The second type of SPA is specific to cross-functional (cross-departmental) work which is the norm in the modern organization. Without an SPA for tasks, it is nearly impossible to monitor an activity or check progress, and it is also almost impossible to get a commitment for the task. This is often the case when in organizations one hears, "Well, I didn't do it, wasn't he supposed to?" The absence of SPA creates a situation where everybody is responsible for everything, and nobody is responsible for anything.

Another key component of success is to have in place "by-whens." A by-when is the specific date or time by which a person (SPA) has agreed to complete a task. This is a negotiated date

or time by the two people involved in the project. The negotiation occurs through a conversation such as, "I need that done by Wednesday at three o'clock; will that work for you?" By-whens are not to be confused with threats, warnings, punishments, or reprimands. Rather they are a commitment to action between two human beings, either boss to employee, or employee to employee. Of course, there are times when a by-when is needed immediately and is not negotiable.

An organization that commits to use by-whens in everyday activities, and follows through with them, will become more and more effective at getting the work done. By-whens are a commitment to action. Without single point accountability and a by-when for a project, there is no practical commitment to that project. However, commitments are only part of the puzzle. Once such commitments are made, then the leaders must do their part, including holding those who are SPA's accountable to the tasks. If there is no monitoring, no support, no actions (including reprimand) if things are slipping, then there is no accountability.

On Organizational Development being a distinct discipline

It is our strong belief that Organizational Development is a professional discipline. In order to be capable of doing the work that Crosby & Associates aspires to in any organization one must commit years to training and apprenticeship. All our associates hold Masters Degrees or an equivalent of coaching and training with a master in the field of OD plus at least ten years of doing the work. Suffice to say, training in counseling, being a manager or leader for years, or training in a few problem solving methodologies does not make one an organizational development professional. Crosby & Associates holds their consultants to the highest standards.

On being practical

We have both a lofty goal of OD, which is to create again what we have helped emerge in many organizations and a practical belief that not all organizations need or want complete cultural change. Of course we want to create a fundamental change in cultures but we also pride ourselves in being practical. Realizing that many organizations don't have a need or motivation to make such a large fundamental change, we also provide practical solutions to solve the smaller problems that nag all organizations.