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# SPEED TO MARKET

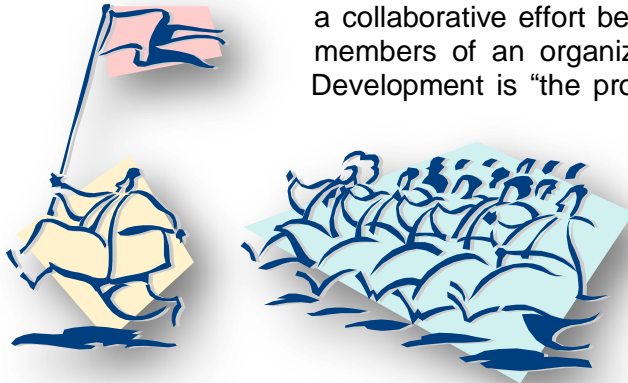
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## Organization Change as War

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In contemporary practice, organization development (OD) is perceived as a collaborative effort between a consultant or change leader, and the members of an organization. According to [Wikipedia](#), Organization Development is “the process through which an organization develops the internal capacity to most efficiently and effectively pursue its mission, and sustain itself over the long term.”

Leading OD practitioners offer their own views:

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- *Richard Beckhard*: “Organization development is a planned effort, organization-wide, managed from the top, to increase organization effectiveness and health, through planned interventions in the organization's processes, using behavioral science knowledge.” Richard Beckhard, is a pioneer in the field of organizational development, and author of *Organization Development: Strategies and Models*.
- *Warren Bennis*: “Organization Development is a complex strategy intended to change the beliefs, attitudes, values, and structure of organizations so that they can better adapt to new technologies, markets, and challenges.” Warren Bennis, pioneered the revolution of less hierarchical, more democratic and adaptive organizations. He is Professor of Business Administration, University of Southern California.
- *Warner Burke*: “OD is not just ‘anything done to better an organization’; it is a particular kind of change process designed to bring about a particular kind of end result. OD involves organizational reflection, system improvement, planning, and self-analysis.” Warner Burke is Professorship of Social-Organizational Psychology, Columbia University, and author of *Organization Change: Theory and Practice*.

The common theme among these definitions is that organization development conforms to the management process. It is planned, strategic, rational, has predetermined goals, involves the redesign of structures and processes, and generally involves a systematic approach to modifying tangible and intangible organizational characteristics. This depiction of OD is accurate, but not complete. It ignores the power dynamics involved when two significant forces in the change process meet.

The premise of this article is not to challenge prevailing definitions of OD; rather, it is to use the analogy of *Organization Change as War* to further our understanding of the organization change process so you can more easily recognize and overcome obstacles to change in your shop .

**Resistance to Change:** Before proceeding with this analogy, let's deal with the common perception that "resistance to change" is the reason origination change efforts fail. "Resistance to change" is one of those buzz words that gets thrown around a lot, but is really superficial. In fact, talking about change in generalities is not particularly helpful. Let's look at an example:

A man has been taking the same route to work for 20 years. He believes this to be the best route and has no reason to vary it. After 20 years, this behavior is so engrained that he doesn't even have to think about it. His routine has become automatic.

One day, in talking with a co-worker who lives nearby, he learns the co-worker takes a different route to work that is 5 miles shorter and is a few minutes faster. The very next day the man tries the new route and finds it superior to the one he has been using for 20 years. He determines the shorter route equates to a gas savings of some \$500 per year, and never looks back. His behavior changes immediately, and the new route becomes his new routine.

Was there resistance to change? His routine could not be any more embedded, yet it changed immediately when he saw the benefits of the new route.

**Let's look at another example.** An estimator working in the same shop for 20 years has developed his own data base and techniques for estimating the cost of processing fabricating and machining work. He has a respectable hit rate and most jobs are profitable.

An organization development program has been initiated with a heavy emphasis on process improvement. One of the objectives is to make the quoting process more transparent. The idea is to enable additional people to learn how to quote so they can be assigned to quoting during periods of peak demand. This increase in quoting capacity will enable RFQs to be turned around more quickly. Faster responses to RFQs will generate more work, and this is part of the company's growth strategy.

Do you think the estimator might be more than a little resistant to sharing his knowledge and methods developed over 20 years so that other people can do his job? Might the estimator see the loss of status and job security as a threat? After all, if many people can do what he can do, and do it as well, where does that leave him?

Here we have two different change scenarios. One provokes resistance while the other is readily accepted and put into practice. So what does this say about "resistance to change?"

**Threat Assessments:** When introducing change into any part of an organization, it is advisable to conduct a *Threat Assessment* (TA) for all the individuals who will be affected by the change you are contemplating. A TA looks at the change from each individual's point of view to determine a perceived level of risk.

Once a threat is identified, it must be addressed and not glossed over. For example, in the case of the estimator (Jim) who would naturally resist the idea of sharing his knowledge and risking his job security, the approach was direct. We told Jim we understood the threats the change posed for him personally. Once this was acknowledged, he visibly relaxed and became more talkative. During the course of the conversation, we jointly created a solution. First, we changed

the level of estimating from the “Office of Estimating” to the “Department of Estimating” with Jim as the Department Head. Jim’s primary responsibility in his new position would be to develop the department’s ability to function without him doing all the estimating himself. This meant he would be responsible for training and supervising apprentices which, in turn, meant he had to invent a learning program that would have apprentices performing well in a few months.

Jim’s second major responsibility was to develop closer contacts and working relationships with customers. Without having to produce estimates himself, he would have more time to help customers define their needs more clearly before issuing an RFQ. He could offer solutions to difficult problems they were experiencing; and generally use his knowledge and expertise to help customers get more value for their money. That would be good for the Company as well as the customers. Partnering with customers, along with turning RFQs around quickly, was another part of the company’s growth strategy,

And to top it off, we assured Jim his job was secure, and he got a raise to go along with his new responsibilities and position. Do you think Jim is still resistant to change, or is he a committed player in advancing the company’s strategy for growth?

**The Protagonists:** In our *Organization Change as War* analogy, the protagonists are the Forces of Change and Improvement on one side; and the Forces of the Status Quo on the other. The Forces of Change ostensibly represent improvement, while the Forces of the *Status Quo* represent business as usual. Each side has its own weapons of war, strategies, tactics, and subterfuges.

**The Forces of Change and Improvement:** The Forces of Change and Improvement have some powerful armaments on its side—leadership, management, experience, and an organized approach are primary. Previously, we described how organization development conforms to the management process with change efforts led by an experienced change leader. The content of the change program itself should be strategically designed so achieve a series of objectives over the course of the program.

The level of management and organization inherent in a planned process of change (another definition of organization development), is very powerful, especially when viewed in relationship to the lack of organization on the side of the *status quo*.

A second significant advantage for the Forces of Change is the authority of management. When management backs a program and people know they are serious about implementation, this goes a long way towards facilitating the change process. No one wants to risk management’s ire and be branded as someone who is “not on board” or “not a player.” This is why you hear the constant mantra from change leaders for the need for *management involvement* in these types of programs. Conversely, when management is not actively involved and supporting the program, members of the organization (rightly) perceive it as not being important, and so either ignore the program or just pay lip service to it. Don’t underestimate organization members’ ability to sniff out a bogus program.

A third significant advantage on the side of the Forces of Change is leadership. An experienced change leader knows what to expect, and has the skills to manage the program. He or she also knows how to work with individuals to lessen resistance, and use their knowledge to advance the goals of the business.

**Education and Training:** Another powerful weapon on the side of the Forces of Change is education and training. Education is the acquisition of knowledge, and training is learning the skills required to apply this knowledge effectively. Rather than generalized education and training, it is important to design a program that is specific to the business and how it works. Relevancy is a big factor in making the education and training component of any program useful, and for helping to move the change process along. Much of the education and training we design and deliver at Delta Dynamics focuses on how the business works, and showing people how it has to be managed to be profitable. Once they understand the need for operating in a certain way, they are far less resistant to participating because it makes sense and they can see how it contributes to the company's goals

**The Forces of the *Status Quo*:** The Forces of the *Status Quo* are not highly organized and do not have a formal program like The Forces of Change and Improvement. The *status quo* acts more locally than globally, sometimes taking on the characteristics of guerilla fighters against the more organized and visible Forces of Change. Local leaders may emerge, but there is generally no overall leader of the opposition similar to the change leader.

This does not mean that the Forces of the *Status Quo* are easy to defeat. For one thing, they have tradition and inertia on their side, as well as the perceived safety and security that comes from past successes. It can be difficult to argue that change is necessary when the old, established ways of doing things seem to be working just fine. The old expression, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" can be a powerful obstacle.

The problem is the need for change is often seen by those in the company who are looking ahead (or at least should be), and they see a need before it become apparent to everyone else. The message is, "It may not be broke now, but it soon will be, so let's get a jump on what we have to do to maintain our competitiveness." Effective leadership looks ahead; ineffective leadership gets caught off guard and reacts.

**Discrediting the Change Leader:** Another tactic The Forces of the *Status Quo* employ is to discredit the change leader. This is especially true when it is someone from the outside who has been engaged to lead the effort. Generally, organization members mistakenly believe the change leader has to be someone who is technically knowledgeable in their business, and they cannot understand how someone who does not know how to machine a part or grind a surface can possibly know enough about their business to do any good. This, of course, misses the point. The change leader's expertise is in understanding the business and determining what has to be done to make it more competitive and profitable. If technical improvements are required, people in the organization are generally well aware of this need.

Appointing an internal change leader presents its own set of problems. A lack of perspective, lack of power and authority, and an inability to deal with sacred cows are a few of the hurdles they face.

**Dragons:** Another tactic employed by the Forces of the *Status Quo* is to pay lip service to the need for change, but not really to participate. Opponents do this by failing to show up for meetings, or failing to complete assignments, or bad-mouthing the program and its leadership, and in other ways. Often these people can be brought on board with a direct conversation to explain what we are trying to achieve and why. Once they are flushed out, they are not quite as brave when it comes to sabotaging the program. We call these people *Dragons*.

But sometimes Dragons are actually well-motivated. They may refuse to participate because they have had a bad experience in the past and want to avoid disappointment. Or they may feel they have a lot to offer and are being left out. Or perhaps they don't participate because they don't see how the program will actually achieve the intended results. We have had many experiences working with Dragons and finding them to be the best program contributors once their issues have been addressed.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to change is established routines. Look at it this way... management spends a lot of time and effort establishing policies and procedures with methods to monitor and control how things are done in the organization. If the company is ISO certified, this is another set of systems and controls that aim to ensure consistency. Change often requires this infrastructure to be dismantled or redesigned so that it supports new processes and approaches. Going against time-honored ways of doing things and the fear of running afoul of the management control system are significant deterrents to change.

Here is what Niccolo Machiavelli has to say about the difficulty of change in *The Prince*:

*We must bear in mind, then, that there is nothing more difficult and dangerous, or more doubtful of success, than an attempt to introduce a new order of things in any state. For the innovator has for enemies all those who derived advantages from the old order of things, while those who expect to be benefited by the new institutions will be but lukewarm defenders. This indifference arises in part from fear of their adversaries who were favored by the existing laws, and partly from the incredulity of men who have no faith in anything new that is not the result of well-established experience. Hence it is that, whenever the opponents of the new order of things have the opportunity to attack it, they will do it with the zeal of partisans, whilst the others defend it but feebly, so that it is dangerous to rely upon the latter.*

**Summary:** Looking at the process of change as a war between the *Forces of Change* and the *Forces of the Status Quo* can add a level of insight and understanding that can be useful in overcoming obstacles and moving the change process forward. Conducting Threat Assessments where people are adversely affected by change is a good tool for understanding their reluctance and finding ways for dealing with it. It's important not to gloss over resistance, but to take the time to understand its source and develop viable solutions.

The *status quo* presents a formidable barrier to the introduction of new processes, methods, policies, and responsibilities. However, when the Forces of Change follow an organized approach with a program that makes sense and can be explained to members of the organization (that also combines relevant education and training, management support, and an experienced change leader), the *Forces of the Status Quo* will yield. After all, everybody wants the same thing...an organization that can adapt to new challenges, become more competitive and profitable with job security for all its members.

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**Having difficulties implementing changes and improvement? Too slow? Not enough bang for your buck? Dragons breathing fire?**

**Call Vince Bozzone at Delta Dynamics at 248-333-0482 for a candid discussion of your situation and what we can do for you.**