



# ORGANISATION DEVELOPMENT FOR LEADERS

or Everything leaders wanted to know about OD  
but didn't know where to start

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to clarify for leaders some of the key principles and practices of Organisation Development (OD). The intention is to de-mystify the field of OD, and to provide practical ideas on how the field of OD can support you on your leadership journey.

## WHAT IS OD?

Edgar Schein defines OD as follows, “OD is all the activities engaged in by managers, employees, and helpers that are directed toward building and maintaining the health of the organisation as a total system.”

One of the reasons that OD is often misunderstood is that the field draws on a number of disciplines to support an organisation being able to fulfil its mission and achieve its strategies. These disciplines include, but are not limited to, Behavioural Science, Psychology, Systems Theory, Sociology, and Organisation Behaviour.

## PRINCIPLES OF OD

A key principle of all OD definitions and work is that of taking a systems approach, to see elements of any person, team, or organisation as part of an interrelated whole. Organisations are living systems, with interactions between the people and the processes and structures, all in pursuit of a mission and achievement of goals.

Anyone can practice OD, just like anyone can practice Finance by putting together a budget, or Sales by promoting a product or service. However, there are specialists in OD, just like there are those who specialise in Finance, Sales, etc. OD practitioners have an understanding of systems, a toolbox of processes, and competencies in areas such as facilitation and change management.

## WHY IS OD IMPORTANT TO YOU?

You and your organisation have a mission to achieve, strategies to fulfil, KPIs to meet, and aspirations to live into. The research is clear, that most strategies and initiatives do not meet the expectations of leaders. OD is a field of practice to help ensure you have the organisation health and fitness to achieve your strategies and goals.

## WHAT DOES OD LOOK LIKE?

In the field of OD, attempts to shift a system to a healthier state entail many levels of an organisation, each with a number of possible interventions. Here are some examples of interventions that have come from the field of OD, in three broad categories: self, group, and organisational. Here is an overview of the three areas:

1

### Self as a System

Coaching, Leadership Styles and Development, 360 Feedback, Job Design, Personality Assessments

2

### Group as a System

Group/Team Dynamics, Team Roles, Conflict Optimisation, Inter-group Dialogue, Change Management (note: change can be at all three levels of system)

3

### Large Systems

Organisation Culture, Engagement Surveys, Organisation Diagnostic Frameworks, Change Management, Stakeholder Engagement, Whole System Interventions

## CONCLUSION

Hopefully OD will be clearer for you after reading this paper. Best wishes on your journey of co-creating a vibrant, healthy, fit organisation, equipped to fulfil its mission, achieve its strategies and meet the challenges ahead.

The purpose of this paper is to clarify for leaders some of the key principles and practices of Organisation Development (OD). OD is a term used quite often in the Singapore Public Service these days, but one which seems to be largely misunderstood. We hope that this paper will de-mystify what OD is, and will provide practical ideas on how the field of OD can support you on your leadership journey.

# WHAT IS OD?

## WHAT IS ORGANISATION DEVELOPMENT?

“OD is

- (1) planned,
- (2) organisation-wide,
- (3) managed from the top, to
- (4) increase organisation effectiveness and health through
- (5) planned interventions in the organisation’s ‘processes’, using behavioural-science knowledge”.

Another thought leader in the field and MIT professor, Edgar Schein, defines OD in simpler terms: “OD is all the activities engaged in by managers, employees, and helpers that are directed toward building and maintaining the health of the organisation as a total system.” This is something you are already doing, at least to some degree.



A key principle of all OD definitions and work is that of taking a systems approach, to see elements of any person or organisation as part of an interrelated whole. Organisations are living systems, with interactions between the people and the processes and structures, all in pursuit of a mission and an achievement of goals. A team is social system, a collection of individuals that is not always the sum of its parts. And you are a human system, a unique blend of life experiences, personality, ethnicity, gender, and all types of talents and intelligences.

Anyone can practice OD, just like anyone can practice Finance by putting together a budget, or Sales by promoting a product or service. However, there are specialists in OD, just like there are those who specialise in Finance, Sales, etc..

## OD PRACTITIONERS HAVE THREE SPECIALISED AREAS OF EXPERTISE:

1

an understanding of systems theory, behavioural science, and action research,

2

an expansive toolbox for supporting leaders and organisations, and

3

they have competencies in areas such as facilitation and change management.



# HOW CAN YOU LEAD WITH AN OD FRAME?

Leaders with an OD mindset see themselves as stewards of a living system, not as someone trying to tune up a machine. To use the metaphor of tree planting, some people plant trees with the good intention of bringing more green to an area, or to decrease global warming. However, depending on where they are planted, the trees may not reach their full potential, they may disturb the ecosystem of the area, and they may not do anything to mitigate the effects of global warming.

The OD equivalent of this scenario is the practice of Permaculture. Permaculture, like OD, is a broad concept. It is defined as a set of design principles inspired by nature, to integrate people care, earth care, and fair share principles of sustainability. The driving question of Permaculture is “how does this element fit into the larger interrelated system?”



So instead of implementing an initiative as a one off attempt to build the organisation, like organising a particular training programme or using a new strategy tool (well-intentioned tree planting), leaders can be purposeful and systemic, like a Permaculturist, to ensure that initiatives serve the whole system over the short and long-term. As a leader, whether it is of an agency, a division, or a team, how systemic and long-term are you, and how much of a Permaculturist are you?

Leaders can also partner with OD practitioners. Think of OD professionals as Coaches or Counsellors, being in service of the highest good of the organisation. A metaphor to describe those who practice OD is that of a Sherpa, supporting leaders and organisations to climb to the summit.

You don't have to call it OD. For example, in the pharmaceutical and medical fields, using the term OD usually has negative connotations, given that people might connect it to OverDose. So you can call it organisational health, organisation excellence, etc. However, no matter what you call it, remember that there is a field and practice of "OD" that is here to support you to achieve your mission and goals.

“ Now that we have explored what OD is about, we next want to provide you with some food for thought on why it is important to you in your role as a leader. ”

# WHY IS OD IMPORTANT TO YOU?

You and your organisation (team, division, agency, etc.) have a mission to achieve, strategies to fulfil, KPIs to meet, and aspirations to live into. The role of OD is to help ensure that your organisation has the internal fitness/organisational health to do what it is meant to do. If you want to complete a triathlon, you need a number of strategies and types of fitness and competencies. Similarly, if you want to fulfil your mission, you need to make sure you are checking your organisation's fitness level, from a systems perspective.

If you are like most leaders, you have experienced change initiatives and strategy imperatives that did not live up to your expectations. Depending on which study you read, the percentage of dissatisfaction of leaders for the results of change efforts and strategy implementation ranges from 50-90%. Because OD is a process-oriented profession, there is a realisation that it takes leadership, people, processes, and culture to get results, not just a well-crafted strategy.

One element of an organisation system is its Culture. OD does not promote working on Organisation Culture because it is a nice thing to do, or because it something on a to-do list. All interventions concerning Organisation Culture are meant to be discussed in the context of supporting the mission and strategies of an organisation. Do you have the culture that will support the fulfilment of your strategy? This is a crucial question, because as Peter Drucker reminded us, "culture will eat strategy for breakfast".





A number of ministries and agencies have been working on aligning their behaviours and processes to their mission and strategies. For example, some agencies have identified that being more service-oriented goes beyond the citizen-facing staff, but requires a culture of service, as well as enabling processes and technology.

Another example is being more collaborative. Everyone likes the idea of partnership, within agencies and as One Public Service, but often making it happen can be quite difficult, because of resource constraints and the possible sacrifice of KPIs. One agency recently created a collaboration simple rule “Stay Positive for Partnership!” to remind all staff at all levels to work through some of the initial challenges of collaboration within and across agencies, to seek possibilities for common ground. Aligning systemic factors, like reward systems and leadership norms around managing exceptions, can create superior results.



Are you and the people in your team/organisation clear and aligned on the Mission, as well as key Strategies and Goals?



Is your organisation fit and ready to create a successful future?



Are the culture, processes and systems of the system you lead supporting the successful fulfilment of the mission and implementation of your strategies?

“ Now that we have explored what OD is and how the field can support your individual and collective success, let’s look at what OD looks like in action. ”

# WHAT DOES OD LOOK LIKE?

While it probably sounds helpful to be a Permaculturist of a living system and getting your organisation fit for the future, you might be wondering what OD looks like, so you can recognise it and employ some of the frameworks and tools.

In the field of OD, attempts to shift the system to a healthier state entails many levels of an organisation, each with a number of possible interventions. Here are some examples of interventions that have come from the field of OD, in three broad categories: self, group, and organisational.

Here is an overview of the three areas:

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## Self as a System

Coaching, Leadership Styles and Development, 360 Feedback, Job Design, Personality Assessments

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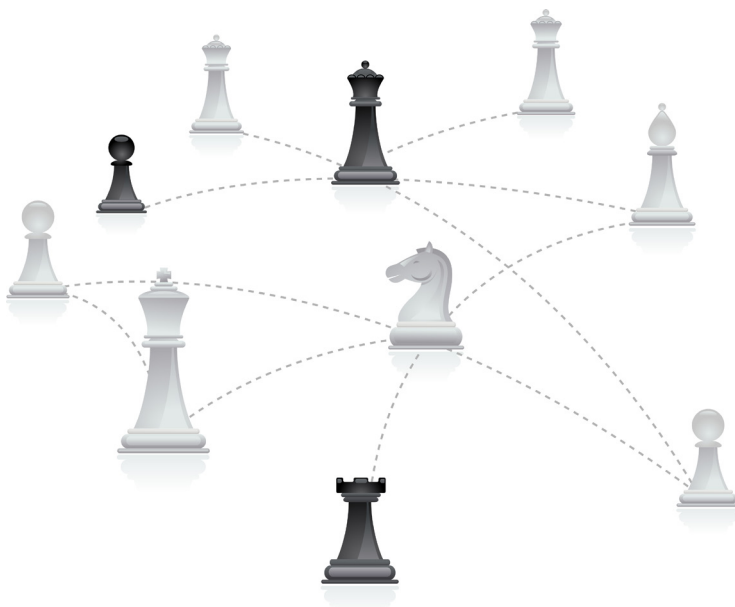
## Group as a System

Group/Team Dynamics, Team Roles, Conflict Optimisation, Inter-group Dialogue, Change Management

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## Large Systems

Organisation Culture, Engagement Surveys, Organisation Diagnostic Frameworks, Change Management, Stakeholder Engagement, Whole System Interventions



The rest of the paper has some reminders for you as a leader, at the three levels of system mentioned above:

1. self,
2. with groups, and
3. with the larger systems you operate in.

# 1. SELF AS A SYSTEM

As was mentioned earlier, you are a human system with many dimensions. The first element we will explore is how you can generate positive momentum in any size system, with possibilities for the future combined with an understanding of the practicalities of the present.

## ARE YOU A VISIONARY WITH A GOOD SENSING OF THE GROUND?

A key framework of OD is to understand where you are going, where you are, and what obstacles might be faced along the way. With enough clarity on these three issues, it increases the chances of formulating effective strategies. Peter Senge says that leadership grows from the capacity to hold creative tension, the energy generated when people articulate a vision and tell the truth about current reality.

Providing a vision of where you want to go applies to everything from a conversation to a 5-year plan. Every meeting, project, and process is an opportunity to ask yourself and/or others “What do I/We want to create?”. When this question becomes a way of life, and it is clear that you understand the current realities, you spend a lot more time moving towards a desired future. Even if you don’t have a clear vision for the future, you might have some ideas, and the vision can be to co-create more clarity together.

When you can help generate possibilities to move towards a desired state, while maintaining and expressing a strong sensing of the realities of the current state, you create momentum for positive change.

Peter Senge reminds us that the first step in learning to create larger scale tension, is learning to manage creative tension within yourself.



How masterful are you at generating energy with the possibilities of the future, while embracing the practicalities of the present? What kind of impact would you like to have on the team and organisation you lead?

Exploring your impact on others is in the next section.

# WHAT IS YOUR IMPACT ON OTHERS

As a leader of a social system, your style and behaviours have an impact on the system you lead. As Educator Parker Palmer said “A leader is one who has an unusual degree of power to project on other people his or her shadow or his or her light.”

- For example, if you use a more authoritarian leadership style, you are likely to create a culture with some fear in it, where people are less likely to express their ideas. If you are a leader with an easy going style and you give people the benefit of the doubt when they don't produce results, you would probably find a culture that people would say lacks discipline and professionalism. If you trust people and also hold them accountable for what they do, then you would create a different culture.
- Just one characteristic, like how open you are to feedback and new ideas, can make a big difference in a team or organisation. After all, Jay Forrester once said that “The Hallmark of a Great Organisation is “how quickly bad news travels upward.”



**So how is your style impacting the system that you lead? What type of leadership would best serve the system you are part of?**

We have talked about how your styles impact culture. With a systemic view of human systems, there are also dynamics based on where you sit in the system. We will first look at what happens when you are the positional leader of a team or organisation, and then move on to what it is like to be in the middle of an organisation system.



## HOW IS YOUR LIFE AT THE TOP?

Because OD is a field that takes a systems view, there is recognition of how certain dynamics play out in organisations. In this section, we will look at the times when you are the top positional leader in a human system.

There is an old saying that it is lonely at the top. If you feel like that, perhaps you can get a reminder from OD thought leader and systems expert Barry Oshry. He says that leaders at the top of any system have a tendency to be burdened by what is happening in the organisation. The litmus test of whether or not you are overly burdened is that if you are up in the middle of the night worrying about something in the organisation, and you know you are the only one worrying. This could be a sign that you are being a heroic leader, trying to “save the day” by yourself.

In this VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous) world we live in, heroic leadership is less likely to come up with the answer to situations that arise. It often takes more shared leadership to make sense of the situation and determine a course of action, although as a leader you are still the one accountable for the decisions and outcomes.

It is possible that it is best if you are the only one to be thinking of an issue, but reflect and see if it would be healthier for the system if others were involved. One of your roles as a leader is to develop the leadership capacity of the organisation. How do you do that? You coach others, you develop the team that reports to you, and you help build a culture where acts of leadership are found in all levels of the system. You want the health of the entire organisation to be everyone’s responsibility.

So by involving and developing others, you get some help, others grow their leadership capacity, and the team/organisation becomes more capable of dealing with complexity and change. As a bonus, the next time you are thinking of how to resolve an issue, you will know that others are also thinking of ideas as well, and hopefully you all sleep better at night knowing this is a team effort.



How much of a heroic leader are you, and how much do you share leadership?

After that exploration of life at the top, we will now move on to look at what it is like to be “stuck in the middle”, a phenomena that you will most likely recognise.

## HOW ARE YOU AT MANAGING BEING SANDWICHED IN THE MIDDLE?

Whether you are a Permanent Secretary or a first-line Supervisor, you sometimes find yourself in between the people who report to you and the people you report to. This dynamic of being pulled in different directions can also occur when you represent your organisation to external stakeholders. Does this phenomena sound familiar to you?

You want to manage this space very strategically. You probably have already developed some strategies for managing this middle space, and if you are like most of those “stuck in the middle”, working even harder to take care of everyone’s requests is probably one of them. As you work hard to serve all elements of the system, you might lose some of your independence of thought, and find yourself acting more like a mediator than a leader.

Barry Oshry weighs in once again on system dynamics, offering you strategies to be more effective, this time from the “middle space”. Here are a few: You can coach one of the parties to talk to the other, or you can bring the parties together and facilitate a discussion. You can also at times empower yourself to make decisions on behalf of the whole system (act like a top), and let the other parties know of the decision.

Because being in the middle often comes with such a busy schedule, he says that leaders don’t often make the time to meet with peers. He recommends that you use peers as a support network. Together, you can build trust and support, co-develop coping strategies, co-create collaborative efforts, and generate solutions that cover multiple levels of the system and make your life in the middle more manageable.



### How are you managing your space in the middle?

Understanding some of your personal and positional dynamics of your place in an organisation system is important, and the next section broadens that perspective to the groups you work with.



## 2. GROUPS/SOCIAL SYSTEMS

You have had the opportunity to reflect on how your style and position can impact your effectiveness, and the effectiveness of the organisation you work in. Now we will shift our focus to look at the dynamics of groups and teams.

### ARE YOU BUILDING A HIGH-PERFORMING TEAM?

One of the building blocks of OD is the work done in small groups or teams. Patrick Lencioni, author of a number of books on Organisation Health, has found that the place to start to build a healthy organisation is to build a cohesive leadership team. This concept of building a strong team is applicable at all levels, in order to build a culture of collaboration and shared leadership.

There is enormous potential for leaders in the Public Service to harness the power of a cohesive team. There is a tendency, especially among more introverted leaders, to manage the team one person at a time. This approach has benefits, as leaders often have good relationships with direct reports. However, the downside is often lower levels of collaboration, and meetings without much healthy engaging dialogue. High levels of collaboration and high-quality dialogue are trademarks of high-performing teams and organisations.

Building a high performing team takes intentionality and perseverance, as it takes time for teams to build this capacity. As a leader, you want to guide your team through the stages of group development, what Tuckman identified as Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing. To better navigate the stages of development journey, there are foundational elements of a strong team, fundamentals for you to pay attention to. One model that can help guide you is GRPI, developed by Richard Beckhard, mentioned earlier in the article as the person who coined the term OD. First you need to be sure you have compelling common **G**oals, clear **R**oles, **P**rocesses that keep you structured for success, and good **I**nterpersonal relationships.



Besides GRPI providing you with a way to think of some of the building blocks of teamwork, it is also a diagnostic tool for you. When a team is not doing well, there is a tendency among many people to blame it on Interpersonal Relationships. The sequencing of the GRPI model is purposeful, meaning that the I for Interpersonal element is last for a reason.

When you are diagnosing any team you are part of, first look at the Goals (*Do we have a common purpose? Do we know what our Stakeholders expect from us? How do we want to work together?*), the Roles (*What about the clarity of our Roles, inside the team and with other stakeholders?*), and Processes (*Are we structured for Success?*).

When you examine these three elements, you are likely to find ways to enhance team performance will emerge. If not, you can then move on to Interactions area, to examine the quality of the relationships and how people interact with each other.

1

How high-performing is the team that reports to you?

2

What models and frameworks do you use as building blocks for high-performance?

3

What can you do to enhance the effectiveness of the teams you are part of?

As we have seen, effective team dynamics are an important dimension for you as a leader. Meetings are the most common place to see and help to shift dynamics is in meetings. We will look at that next.

# ARE YOUR MEETINGS REFLECTIVE OF THE CULTURE YOU WANT TO BUILD?

Meetings have been called the “swampy terrain of development”. Meetings are the platform for decisions to be made, policies to be set, and organisation culture to be created and sustained. It can be challenging to create meetings that are generative and engaging, but surely worth the effort, given how much time is spent in meetings.

Meetings have two distinct dimensions to them, typically labelled as Task and Maintenance. The Task function includes the Purpose, Agenda, and Time limit of a meeting. Most leaders are quite familiar with the Task function. However, there is more to a meeting than just accomplishing the Task. The Maintenance element of a meeting includes communication patterns, levels of conflict, how decisions are made, and levels of participation. Effective leaders manage both the Task and Maintenance dimensions of a meeting, and see themselves as building the culture and leadership capacity of the team/organisation, one meeting at a time.

There are some simple things you can do to make meetings more engaging. For example, a short statement from each person to start and end a meeting ensures that every voice is heard, multiple times. Along these lines, you can hear from each person on important issues, to make sure everyone has the opportunity to give their opinion (even at senior levels, there are people who are reticent to speak up, unless they are invited to speak). Or you can break into smaller groups to discuss complex issues, then have each small group report back, followed by a large group discussion. You can also rotate the person chairing each meeting to build higher levels of shared leadership.

To enhance organisation communication and to ensure your meetings get better over time, it is recommended that you spend a few minutes at the end of each meeting, doing a quick summary of the key points, decisions, follow-up actions, and communication to staff, as well as doing a debrief of the quality of the meeting. Sending around minutes of meetings is not usually an effective communication tool, unless you use visuals or other creative ways to summarise the meeting.

Besides looking at the quality of each meeting, you may also want to review your portfolio of meetings, to ensure that each meeting is worthwhile for everyone who attends. Recently, some leadership teams in the Public Service have looked at their meeting platforms and did significant restructuring. They eliminated and combined some of their meetings, and even added others that are now more focussed on particular topics.



How productive and engaging are the meetings you host and are part of? Are your meeting platforms helping everyone to be more effective and productive?

Now that we have explored Self as System and the dynamics of Social Systems, it is time to look at a larger system, that of an organisation.

# 3. ORGANISATION AS A SYSTEM

Building a high-performing organisation has more complexity than personal or team development. Thus, this section will provide you with a range of ways of thinking about how to manage larger systems.

A place to start is how the Strategies of an Organisation are created. An OD approach to developing strategic plans and initiatives is to involve more people in the planning stage. For example, a few years ago the Singapore Police Force involved approximately 800 officers to do a 2-day Strategic Planning process. When you get that level of involvement you don't need to "sell" or cascade the strategies, as they have been co-created by a significant number of staff at all levels and from all functions. This is a principle of OD, that people are more likely to implement what they help to create.

Regardless of how you create your plans, you want to assess whether or not the organisation has the fitness, or capability, to follow through on them. Many plans and change initiatives look good on paper, but were created without a rigorous process for talking about whether the organisation has the capacity to execute the plans.

One way to be more thorough in your planning is to draw up an OD plan, following the Strategic Plans. You can discuss and document the changes that need to happen in the organisation for the strategic plans to be implemented successfully, and how the organisation and strategies are designed. As Tom Northrup said "Every organisation is perfectly designed to get the results it is getting." So you want to make sure you are designed for success.



What level of involvement is there for your strategies and initiatives?

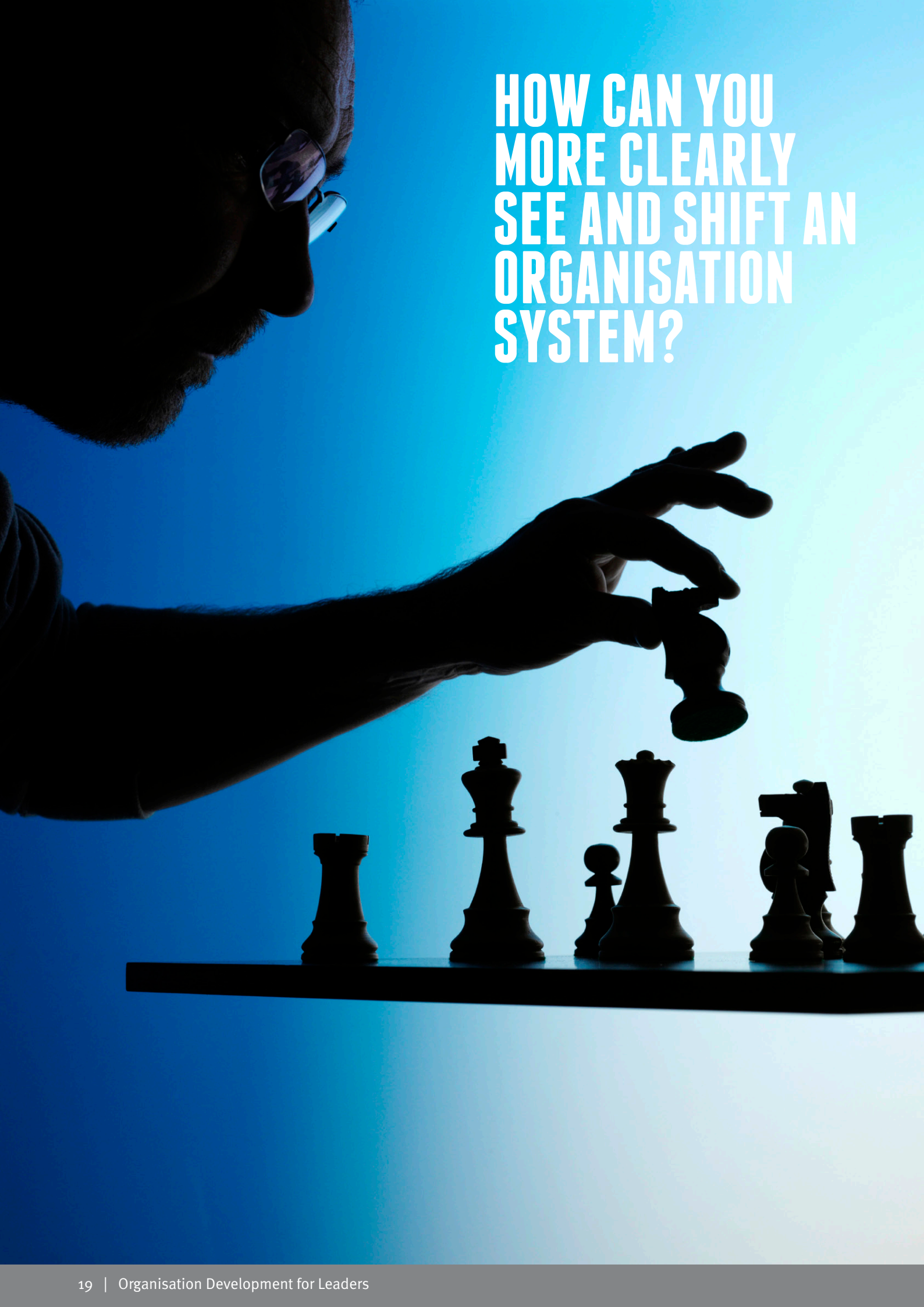


How clear are you and the staff on the key strategies for the organisation?



How confident are you that your organisation has the fitness to accomplish the strategies?

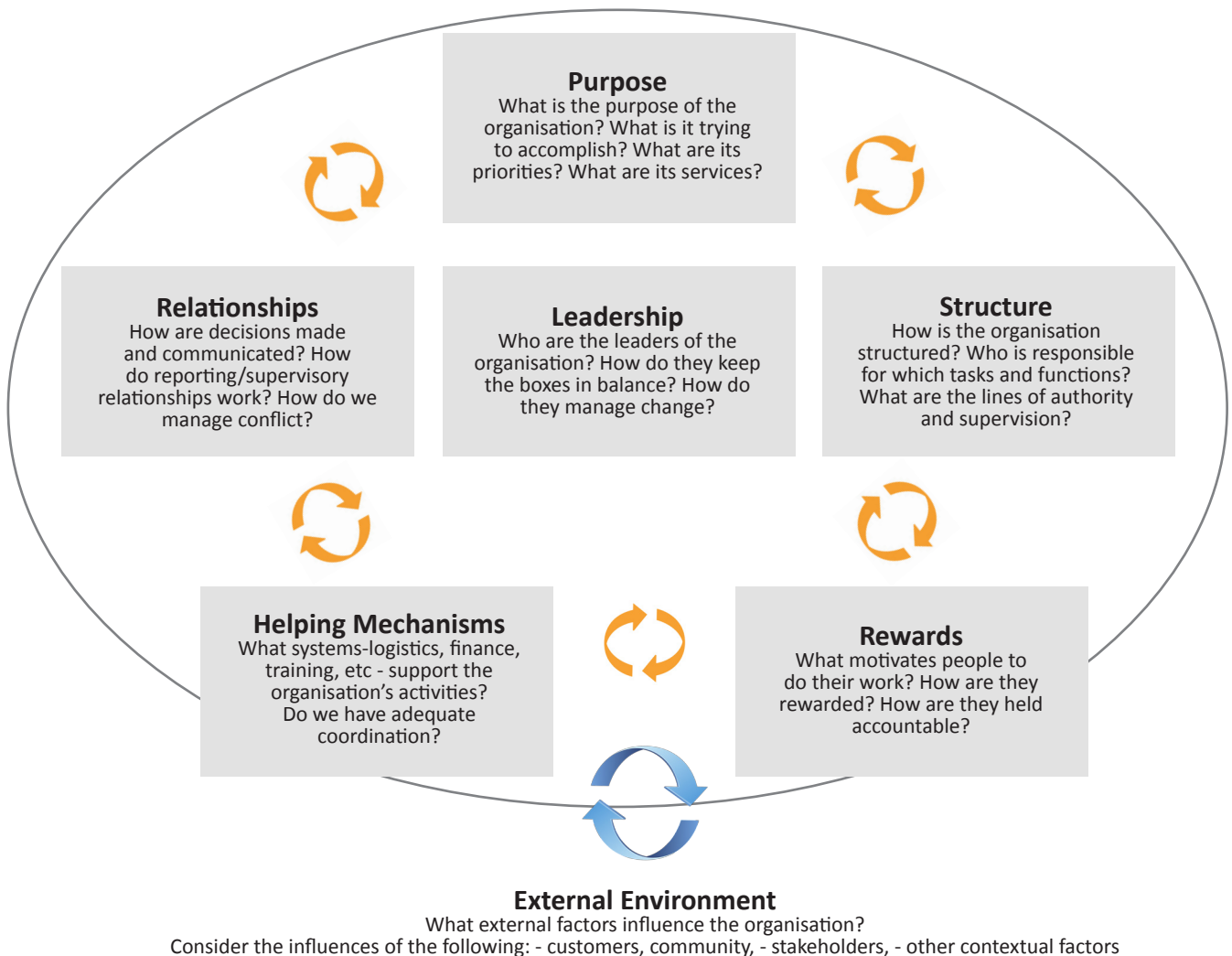
As you think of organisation fitness, you want to be sure you have an awareness of the whole system as you explore fitness levels, just as you would look at various fitness components if you were preparing for a triathlon. In the next section, some ways of more clearly seeing organisation systems will be presented.



**HOW CAN YOU  
MORE CLEARLY  
SEE AND SHIFT AN  
ORGANISATION  
SYSTEM?**

An organisation system is a complex web of relationships and processes. When trying to analyse the health and fitness of a system, it is helpful to have a map of the system. Diagnostic models are not totally comprehensive; as George Box said, “All models are flawed. Some are useful.” So these models are meant to give you a map of the terrain of organisational leadership.

Marv Weisbord, an OD thought leader, created the first such map in the late 1970’s, what he called the **6-box model**. Other models followed, like the McKinsey 7 Ss and the Burke-Litwin model. You will notice below that Weisbord put you, the leader, in the middle of the model, stewarding organisation effectiveness in response to the external environment.

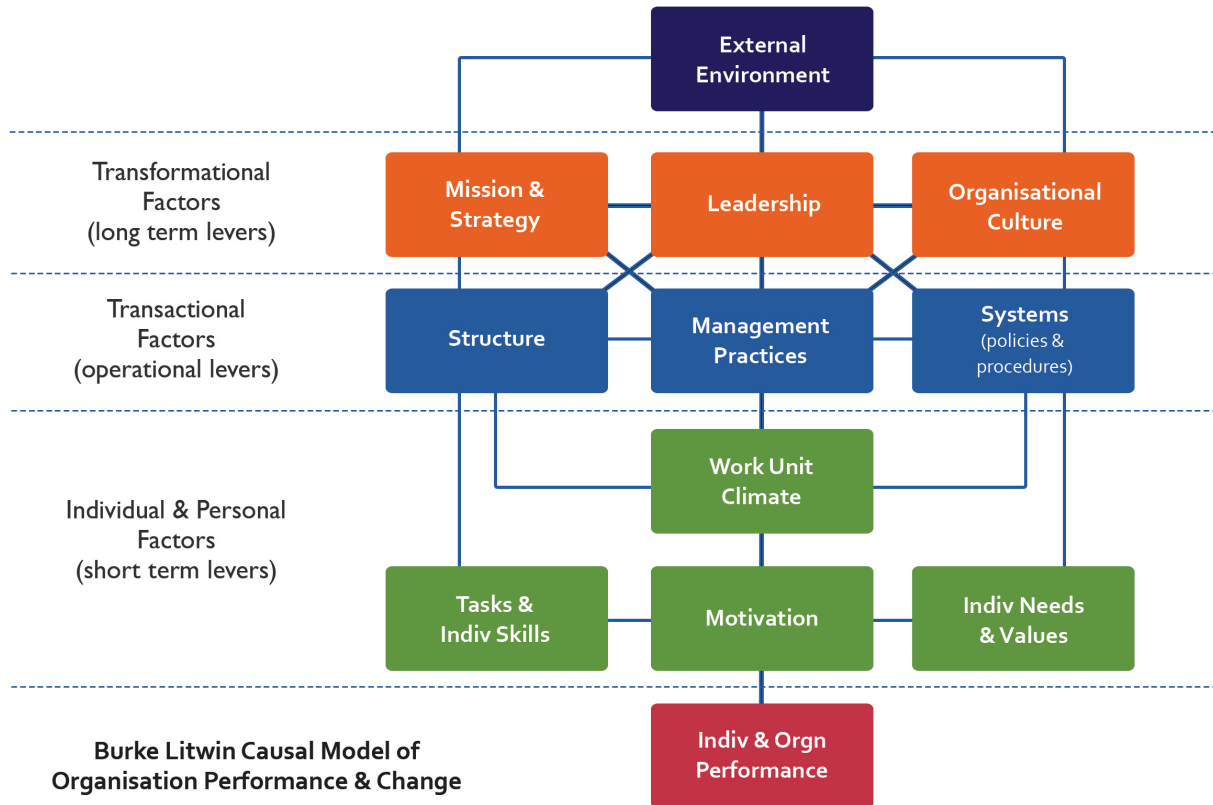


So you can think of your role as someone who helps keep the system balanced and integrated, an orchestra conductor of Purpose, Structure, Rewards, Helping Mechanisms, and Relationships.

Your role is to ensure these elements are responsive to the environment and in harmony with each other, as you are a Permaculturist of a living organisational system.



Another useful OD framework for you to consider is the **Burke-Litwin model**. The model not only provides you with more areas of the system, but also shows where there is higher leverage for transformational shifts.



The Burke-Litwin model gives you a map to look at for the alignment of your organisation. It contains more dimensions than most other models, which makes it look overly complex upon first glance. However, there is some simplicity when you look at the model from a top down perspective, as it provides you with a strategic view of the types of shifts you want to initiate.

Mission and Strategy, Leadership, and Organisation Culture, are transformational in nature. The other layers of the model are more for Transactional and Individual changes. For example, some leaders try to create transformation by restructuring or trying to motivate staff. They can be helpful mechanisms to increase organisation effectiveness, but they do not normally manifest in transformational shifts.

Common frameworks used in the Public Service to assess organisation fitness are Employee Engagement Surveys and the SQA Assessment. Some organisations are very intentional in looking at how these models and assessments can support organisational growth. They use the data to ascertain the sentiments of the system, determine which areas can be enhanced, and by whom. There are still some organisations that just use these potentially powerful tools as a to-do list item to complete every couple of years, and there are missed opportunities for development.



What model or framework do you use to look at the various factors in your system? How purposeful is your organisation when doing Employee Engagement Surveys and SQA Assessments?

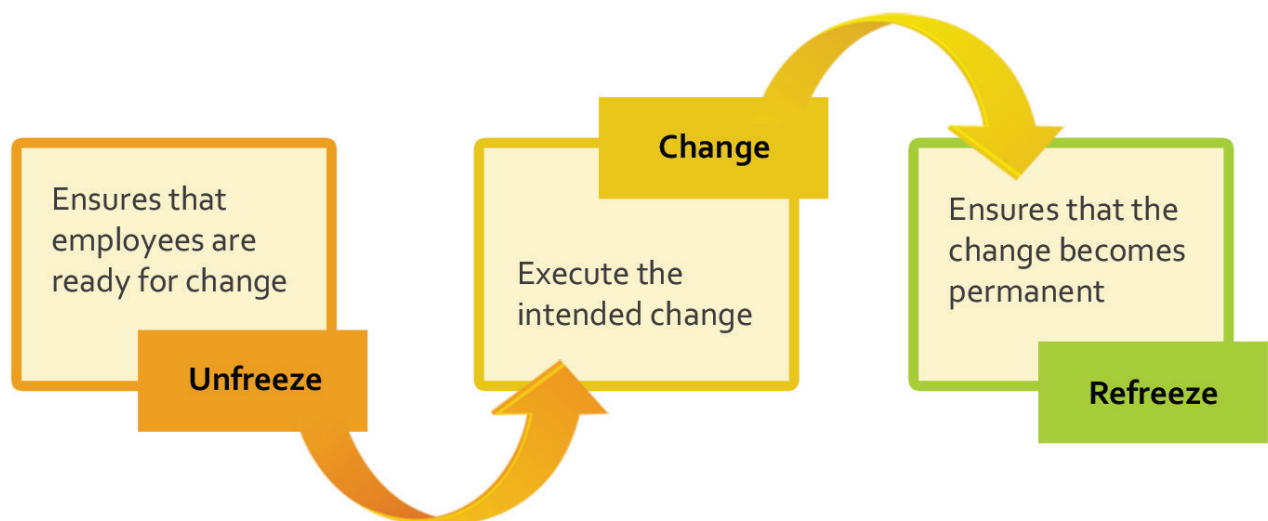
Whether you are making changes to your team meetings or instituting an organisation-wide change, an understanding of change management is useful for you as a leader. That is what we will explore next.

## HOW CAN YOU MORE EFFECTIVELY LEAD CHANGE?

Much of the work you do as a leader requires some type of change management. What are the change models or processes that help make the change process smoother for the people and the organisation?

This topic belongs in both the Social Systems and the Organisations as a System category, so keep in mind that these ideas could apply for small or large scale change.

Most of the change models in the world have their roots in OD founder Kurt Lewin's change model, unfreezing, changing, and refreezing, seen in the following diagram:



As you can see from the diagram, the Unfreeze phase is when you prepare your team or organisation for change. This can be by helping people see and feel the need for change, and/or by showing the benefits of the change. The Change phase is the transition through the change, and the Refreeze phase is to help sure the change is institutionalised.

If you are familiar with John Kotter's 8-stages, the Prosci ADKAR model, or other change models, you will probably see the similarities with the three stages from Lewin's model. The premise is that creating a successful change effort takes a purposeful process, not just an announcement that there will be a restructuring or new procurement system.

The one downside of most of the change models is that it can take a long time for changes to be cascaded, accepted and implemented. Large group Interventions, facilitation processes which have emerged from the field of OD, are an excellent way to accelerate the change process. Organisations such as MCI and LTA have recently hosted large group events, with hundreds of participants, designed to accelerate the change process by getting more people involved in the change. As OD thought leader Marv Weisbord has said, "get the whole system in the room" because "people support what they help to create."

Whether change originates from the top or co-created from many levels, step by step change models are normally more helpful for discrete initiatives, like a new policy, a restructuring, or new ways of communicating with citizens and other stakeholders. You also want to ensure that the people and organisation are able to handle the multitude of changes that happen in organisational life. Be sure to employ multiple modalities for communicating messages, provide transparent information sharing, and build a culture of empowered leadership. These are ways to build a change-ready and resilient culture.



How are you at leading change?



What processes and methods do you use for change?



How do you keep your organisation change ready?

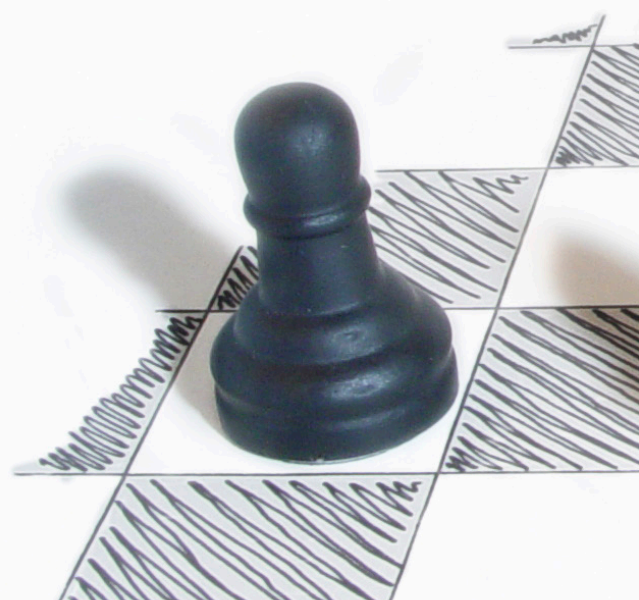
“ We have looked at three levels of systems, using Organisation Development principles and practices as the backdrop. Before moving on towards the conclusion, we will explore one more principle of OD, which is to point out the advantages of working on multiple levels of the system. ”

# WORKING ON AT LEAST THREE LEVELS – FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE

We have explored three levels of systems in this paper, namely Self, Teams, and Organisations. The levels can also be represented in a broader range than what has been covered here. The levels can be seen as intrapersonal, interpersonal, team, division, function, organisation, community, and society.

Transformational change is complex, so you want to consciously work on at least three of the levels of the system, in order to increase the chances of any initiative or intervention having impact. If you focus on the three levels in this paper, for example, you would be doing parallel development on yourself, your team, and the organisation, which would likely lead to a tipping point for the entire system. Leading change over three levels also requires that you embrace quite a bit of ambiguity, as you never know for sure when and where the tipping point will happen.

Even if you lead a small team, you can work on three levels. For example, assume your team now wants to be more service oriented with internal partners, or citizens. You as the leader could work on exhibiting leadership behaviours that are aligned to service leadership; the team members could work to understand how they could serve each other, and the team as a whole could be exploring the needs of stakeholders and creating service standards, along with the necessary infrastructure for success. Working at three levels assures that the entire system has multiple ways to understand service and apply it to the work.



This principle of working with at least three levels of the system is another reason that Large Group Interventions can be so effective, because of the diversity of levels and perspectives that gather to productively focus on a common issue.

“ We have looked at the entire organisation system. It is now time to conclude this paper, so you can go back to leading, hopefully with a clearer idea of OD and what it means for you. ”



# WHAT'S NEXT FOR YOU?

This paper has offered a number of ideas on how you can incorporate more OD thinking and action into your role as a leader. If some of it does not seem new to you, this shows you are already practicing OD in your work. It also shows that many OD practices have become mainstream ways of leading an organisation.

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The reflective questions throughout the article have provided you with some food for thought, on how you might expand your practice of leadership. What are one or two things you can do differently that would most serve the system you work in?

A final reminder is that there are OD practitioners who are ready to support you on your journey, with a large toolbox of practical theories and practices. Just as Finance, Legal, HR, and Strat Planning serve with a specialised focus, so does the OD function. ”



# RESOURCES AND ADDITIONAL READING

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