

# **Organizational Consultation XIX**

## **Development: Part Three**

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Human resource development (HRD) is a term that encompasses a remarkably diverse set of assumptions, activities and goals. While every HRD program should hold increased productivity as its primary goal, there are many justifiable ways to increase productivity that also enrich the lives of the people who work in the organization. I have identified some of the most effective strategies and have linked them to a comprehensive model of HRD. In planning for the implementation of one or more of these strategies, it is useful to keep the other strategies in mind.

### **Human Resource Development Strategies**

While each HRD strategy can potentially play a major role in creating a successful HRD program, the sequence in which the strategies are presented may be just as important. *An appreciative approach to human resource development requires that one be sensitive to the complex interplay between various initiatives.* Some HRD strategies should precede other strategies, either because this strategy develops logically out of the other strategy or because this strategy is less threatening or more easily implemented than other strategies. Early success can build a basis of credibility for the program that will allow for introduction of other strategies.

As an example of the way in which one comes to appreciate the developmental sequencing of strategies, consider the relationship between the assessment of managerial performance and management training. Frequently, management development programs provide training in basic managerial skills, such as supervision and delegation, or in the use of specific managerial procedures, such as strategic planning and team building. Unfortunately, this training is often engaged without having first assessed the manager's current skill or performance level in this area. In essence, the manager is being asked, or required, to consider significant changes in her style or method of working with other people without adequate information being collected

about her current level or style of management. A diagnostic strategy clearly should be introduced along with or before a training strategy.

Conversely, an evaluation or diagnostic strategy should not be left standing alone in a management development program. If a manager receives feedback regarding her supervisory performance in working with subordinates, yet is provided with no resources to bring about change in this performance, then the manager quite justifiably cannot be expected to improve. Her resistance to this feedback is quite understandable, since nothing is being done to assist her in bringing about the desired improvement. Ideally, every piece of information that is generated from a performance assessment instrument or procedure should be coupled with an available training strategy; otherwise, diagnosis is likely to be more punitive than beneficial.

The problem of sequencing is particularly important when considering the first steps in a comprehensive HRD program. In some instances, these will already have been decided. A CEO or professional development advisory committee, for example, may decide that all of the employees in the organization should receive training in the use of a particular Management Information System. Alternatively, all supervisors are to be evaluated by their subordinates, or incentive payments are to be made to each employee who makes use of a new job documentation system. An appreciative leader will at this point usually not try to change such decisions, unless they violate ethical standards or principles of professional practice. Rather, the appreciative leader should work from the problem definition and desired outcomes already formulated by the CEO or committee. Taking an appreciative approach, the leader may wish to expand the plan and possibly even refine its definition. At the same time, he will provide services that directly meet the initially defined problem and that respect the wishes and expectations of those who proposed this plan. This approach is appreciative in that it builds on energy and direction that already exists in the organization. This is likely to be much more productive than if the leader tries to move in a new direction (“starting from scratch”) or tries to move in an opposite direction (“swimming up stream”).

If the appreciative leader is given the opportunity to define a point of entry, she should make this decision on the basis of a systematic assessment of organizational environment and goals, and on the basis of the organization’s potential acceptance of various services. One specific entry point, such as performance appraisal, may seem right for a particular organization, given its current problems and goals. However, if employees would performance appraisals to be too

threatening as an entry point, then a less threatening entry service, such as discussions about work, might be selected. This service, in turn, could be designed to lead the participants, and eventually the entire organization, toward recognition of the important role assumed by performance appraisals and other more threatening, but critical, HRD strategies. Another entry point, such as technical training, may make developmental sense, in terms of the sequencing of other HRD strategies. However, some employees might find this technical training to be “beneath them” and unrelated to their career aspirations. More challenging training and education services might first be provided to these employees—providing tangible evidence of this organization’s appreciation for the high-level interests of its employees.

Organizational leaders frequently complain about widespread resistance to their ideas and programs. Taking an appreciative approach, they might instead acknowledge this resistance as an appropriate and valuable sign that the organization is not yet ready for this particular strategy and that less threatening strategies should first be used to prepare the way for the strategies that potentially have a greater impact. Resistance should never serve as an excuse for not planning. Plans do change, but to *not* plan is to abdicate what control leaders do have over the future of human resource development in their organization.

Unfortunately, decisions concerning the sequencing of various HRD strategies are often made neither on the basis of an assessment of organizational goals nor on the basis of a logical sequence of developmental activities. Frequently, these decisions are based on untested, and even non-stated, assumptions about how people and organizations change. These assumptions often form an elaborate and often unarticulated configuration of concepts, materials, methods, technologies and modes of evaluation through which the process of change is seen. These configurations vary from individual to individual and organization to organization. To the extent that these configurations are untested and unarticulated, many organizational leaders remain oblivious to their own particular set of assumptions about change. These leaders also may be unaware that other sets of assumptions are equally valuable. In order to increase appreciation of various approaches to human resource development, I offer a list of ten strategies that are commonly found in today’s organizations. Each will be briefly described in terms of three issues: (1) assumptions about change, (2) assumptions about organizational functioning and (3) assumptions about those theories, concepts and tools of human resource development that are most viable.

## **Strategy One: Training and Education**

HRD programs that exemplify this strategy tend to be based on the assumption that change occurs primarily by giving people new skills, knowledge and aptitudes. These talents can then be used not only in the performance of specific functions, such as management or program planning, but also in the accomplishment of change itself. It is assumed that reward and punishment systems, *per se*, will not change people; rather individuals must be provided with new skills, knowledge and aptitudes that are appropriate to the desired change.

HRD practitioners who embrace a training strategy may take either a deficit or appreciative perspective. Those taking a deficit perspective usually assume that employees will be more effective if they are provided with new skills and knowledge in performing traditional functions and in using new methods or technologies that reflect new attitudes about the workplace. HRD practitioners who take an appreciative perspective view training and education as enhancing existing competencies, as well as identifying settings in which these competencies are most likely to flourish. Appreciative practitioners also consider new methods and technologies to be driving forces. However, these HRD specialists are more likely to look to old, successful patterns in the organization for a response to the new challenges, before declaring, as do the deficit practitioners, that “we must throw out the old and bring in the new!”

I have identified both training and education as ingredients of a comprehensive HRD program in large part because employees at all levels of the organization need both skills and knowledge. They need the tools and techniques to run their organization as it now exists. This requires training and the development of skills. Employees also need concepts and models to make sense of the changes that will inevitably occur in any organization that faces the unpredictability and complexity of our 21<sup>st</sup> Century world. This requires education and the acquisition of knowledge. While training and education are closely inter-related, and are not easily distinguished from one another, I will continue to make use of both terms. Hopefully, this will reinforce an appreciative perspective with regard to the future. Appreciation encourages not only respect for old, enduring patterns within an organization, but also an anticipation of the future: leaning into the future. *Appreciative development in a 21<sup>st</sup> Century organization involves not only preparation for a world that already exists but also preparation for a world that is yet to be.* This principle must be kept in mind when creating an appreciative organization.

The interplay between training and education, in turn, reveals a much deeper transformation that has occurred in recent years regarding the role of training and education in the development of employees. In the typical modern organization, most training and education occurred prior to the employee being hired or at the start of the employee's tenure in the organization. New hires were expected to have obtained the training and education they needed for a new job in the schools they had already attended or in their previous jobs. High schools, trade schools and vocational schools were to prepare lower level employees for their job, while colleges, graduate schools and professional training programs were to prepare higher-level employees for their lifelong work in the organization.

This assumption regarding the enduring value of initial training and education held true as long as employees tended to stay in the same job for many years and as long as the organization remained relatively stable over time. Whatever changes must be made in one's performance on the job could occur gradually with plenty of opportunity for trial-and-error and informal learning from the old hands in the organization. We are now living in a very different world. Employees do not remain in the same job for very long and even when they do there is much to be learned on a continuing basis as the organization adjusts to its unpredictable and complex environment. It is now imperative that organizational leaders invest in on-going training and education.

As I noted earlier in this chapter, the new development model centers on the notion of lifelong learning. New employees are selected not only because they have skills and knowledge that are directly applicable to the first job they hold in the organization, but also because these new employees exhibit the capacity to learn. They manifest the curiosity that is essential for anyone who wishes to acquire new skills and knowledge. They want to learn primarily because the opportunity to learn is itself compelling, rather than because the learning is required.

This new emphasis on lifelong learning also pushes to center stage the skills, knowledge and aptitudes associated with two competencies: the ability to effectively organize a task and the ability to teach other people how to perform this task themselves. An employee must be able to find the time for learning new skills and acquiring new knowledge. This, in turn, requires that they can temporarily leave their work in order to attend classes or learn on-line. They must be able to get ahead, plan for their absence from the job, or delegate portions of their job to other people. If employees are at some point indispensable, and must therefore never leave their job, then they soon become highly dispensable, for they are no longer up to date in skills and

knowledge. In most instances, therefore, the first training and education programs to be presented to new employees should focus on time management, the organization of tasks and, for managers, processes of supervision and delegation.

Several sequences of HRD strategies that center on training and education have frequently been used with considerable success. One sequence, which I have used extensively in a variety of organizations, involves the use of both the training and education strategy, and coaching (Strategy Ten). One or more basic five-day management development workshops are offered. These workshops focus on interpersonal and group skills, exploration of assumptions, values and philosophies associated with management, and specific training in the use of decision-making and helping skills. A subset of the first group of managers to complete the program is invited to participate in a second training program that focuses on peer-based coaching. After finishing the training, these newly minted coaches complete a brief practicum, during which they try out and receive feedback regarding their coaching performance. Once they have completed the practicum, these peer coaches begin to work with those who are conducting the management development workshops. The peer coaches assist graduates of the five-day training program in their understanding, retention and application of the concepts and tools that were presented in this intensive workshop. As I noted above, coaching can significantly increase the value of a training or education program.

There is a second way in which training and education are interwoven with the fifth strategy (mentoring/coaching). This second sequence makes use of mentoring, rather than coaching, but begins, as does the first sequence, with a five-day management development program. When at least ten percent of the managers have participated in this training program, a mentorship program is engaged—often with the assistance of a Human Resource Bank (see Chapter Two). Contracts are established between those managers who want to explore certain areas in greater depth that is possible in the five-day program and those managers with extensive experience and expertise in these areas.

A match might be drawn between two managers with regard to increased worker involvement in problem solving. The experienced manager, as mentor, may provide informal, just-in-time advice to the less experienced manager. The mentor might even sit in on meetings being conducted by the manager she is mentoring, so that she might provide feedback regarding this manager's attempts to increase worker involvement. Another mentoring relationship might focus

on supervision or delegation. The mentor could sit in on performance review sessions being conducted by the manager he is mentoring. He could instead review the written communication between this manager and her subordinates. In either case, the mentor broadens the perspective of the manager being mentored, while also reinforcing concepts learned in the management development workshop.

An alternative sequence begins with short-term, on-site seminars that focus on specific managerial techniques, such as the rewarding of high performance, or on specific technologies, such as the use of new personal computer-based management information systems. Even when a large number of managers have participated in these seminars over an extended period of time, the training will rarely have a significant, enduring impact if they are conducted in isolation from other developmental activities. These seminars must often be supplemented with organizational consultations, for the policies and procedures of an organization usually must be adjusted when employees begin to use new managerial techniques or new technologies. Many of the other HRD strategies are also appropriate—especially once the credibility of the HRD program is established through these seminars. These HRD services might include on-line educational programs, ongoing and informal gatherings of employees to discuss work-related issues, peer-based assistance programs in which one employee works with another in a specific area, and on-the-job diagnosis and feedback.

### **Strategy Two: Performance Appraisal**

As I note later in this book (Chapter Seven), performance appraisal is an essential, though often abused, strategy in any intention-rich and idea-rich organization. Since I address the use of performance appraisal and its sequencing with other strategies in some detail in Chapter Seven, it is enough to say at this point that performance appraisal can serve effectively as an entry point for human resource development. Furthermore, it is among the most widely used tools for the improvement of work performance. The performance appraisal strategy is based on the assumption that change takes place when an employee is presented with information about her performance through the use of fair diagnostic and evaluative procedures.

A second major assumption usually accompanies the use of performance appraisals as an HRD strategy. It is assumed that evaluation can serve a constructive and developmental purpose. I would offer an addendum to this assumption: evaluation can be constructive and developmental

if it is offered in an appreciative manner. Unfortunately, many performance appraisal programs are deficit-oriented and, as a result, tend to be destructive and serve as a barrier rather than gateway to development. In many instances, whether the performance appraisal is deficit-oriented or appreciative, it is implemented primarily to provide supervisors with information to be used in making decisions about continued employment, promotions, and salaries. This latter use of performance appraisal is frequently associated with the reward system strategy to which I now turn.

### **Strategy Three: Reward System**

Human resource development practitioners are often asked a difficult question: What motivates employees? One answer focuses on the intrinsic awards associated with doing a good job. Successful job performance is itself often rewarding. Improvement in performance is even more rewarding. Most people do not enjoy doing an inadequate job in their chosen field. The experience of repeated failure on the job is usually painful and humiliating. Once employees have acquired and begun to use new methods or have improved their skills in using traditional approaches to their job, they begin to experience greater success on the job. This experience will often inherently motivate employees to work even harder on the improvement of their job-related skills.

Most HRD practitioners would agree that these intrinsic rewards are wonderful—but they're not enough. There must be tangible, monetary reward systems that are equitable and appreciative in nature. Support for the developmental efforts of employees ultimately must come through a set of policies and procedures that tangibly reward the improvement of job performance. If employees are not rewarded for the improvement of their performance, then a HRD program must rely on subtle, and often fickle, motivators like support and recognition from colleagues, personal enhancement of self-esteem, or a deeply rooted commitment to the organization.

An appreciative organization will embrace a policy that provides an objective system of performance appraisal. It will also provide ample resources for use in the improvement of an employee's performance. Tangible rewards are offered to encourage and sustain this improvement. Salary, promotion, and job-security are directly related to the improvement and/or maintenance of a high level of competency and to the acquisition of new knowledge and skills that are related to the long-term growth and welfare of the organization. While salary, promotion

and job-security are key, other forms of recognition and appreciation may compliment, but not take the place of, formal reward systems. Small grants might be given to individuals who wish to experiment with new methods. Release time might be provided to particularly competent or creative employees. In other cases, growth contracts are offered, through which an employee and his or her supervisor establish explicit criteria for assessing and rewarding not only performance but also improvement.

If employees are paid to perform more effectively, then it is assumed with this third strategy that they will do a better job. I would once again amend this assumption to include the belief that an organization must provide additional services to help the employee improve her performance in the area where she hopes to be rewarded. These services usually include training and education (Strategy One) and performance appraisal (Strategy Two). Rewards are a sham if the organization provides no resources, opportunities or information to support the desired improvement. Unfortunately, this amendment to the reward system assumption is often not included—suggesting a simple-minded and mechanistic approach to personal and organization change.

Some visionary leaders have actually moved beyond the coupling of reward systems with other developmental strategies. They have moved, at least partially, to a pay-for-knowledge/skills mode of compensation. This mode can effectively and systematically bring together the reward system and the organization's commitment to employee development. This new mode of compensation challenges the traditional mode, which is based on three criteria: position, seniority and productivity. The higher one's position in an organization, the longer one has worked in the organization, and the more successful one is in achieving specific outcomes, the larger is one's compensation.

In 21<sup>st</sup> Century organizations, with their emphasis on organizational learning, we are likely to witness a growing inclination toward this new mode of compensation, which adds a fourth criterion: acquisition and use of new skills and knowledge. Additional compensation is provided to employees who engage actively in their own ongoing development. This coupling of training and education (Strategy One) with an innovative reward system (Strategy Three) is based on the assumption that the aptitude equation ( $\text{knowledge} + \text{skills} + \text{motivation} = \text{performance}$ ) is key to improvement of performance. It is critical to address not only the knowledge and skills elements

of this equation, but also the motivation element. New skills and knowledge will be engaged when the employee is motivated to apply the newly acquired knowledge and skills.

Typically, salary in a knowledge/skill-based compensation system is determined in part by the successful completion of certain workshops or formal educational programs. However, this compensation plan usually requires one additional element: the employee must make use of this development in the performance of their current job or in performance of other assignments in the organization. In many cases the salary increase is permanent. It is assumed that the newly acquired knowledge or skill will benefit the organization for many years to come. In other cases, the salary increase is time-limited or a one-time bonus is given. It is assumed that an employee should be rewarded only once for their developmental effort. They can earn additional compensation by participating in other developmental programs in the future.

Pay-for-knowledge/skill plans are both very old and very new. For many years, organizations have provided salary increases to employees when they receive a promotion—which usually requires some additional training or education. It is also common for employees to receive a salary increase when they have successfully achieved a formal educational objective. A five percent salary increase, for instance, might be awarded when an employee has earned a masters degree in business or electrical engineering, or when they have been granted a doctorate in law. From another perspective, pay-for-knowledge/skills plans are quite new. They are now based on both internal and external developmental programs. Salary increases may be granted upon completion of specific in-house training programs.

An even more ambitious plan can be inaugurated. Employees prepare a career development plan (Strategy Four) and receive a specific increase in salary once they have completed this plan. Alternatively, employees are given additional compensation for cross training in a related job, thereby eliminating the need for temporary help, or additional compensation for training or education associated with a temporary job assignment. Typically, an employee documents the use of newly acquired skills or knowledge within a specific period of time, following their completion of the training or education program. One final cautionary note regarding pay-for-knowledge/skills: it is critical that the organization assumes some responsibility for ensuring that an opportunity is afforded for the employee to use their newly acquired talents.

#### **Strategy Four: Career Planning/Career Ladders**

This fourth HRD strategy serves as both an alternative and compliment to the third strategy. Each of these strategies addresses the role played by motivation in the performance of employees. The third strategy builds on the assumption that compensation is the prime source of motivation. Strategy Four builds on the assumption that enduring job-related motivation is to be found in a challenging career that aligns with the personal aspirations of the employee. In *Career Dynamics*, Edgar Schein identifies an employee's career as the point of critical interface between personal development and organization development.<sup>i</sup> The career of an employee represents the meeting ground where the intentions of the organization meet with the employee's personal intentions and aspirations. If there is a broad and fertile meeting ground then the employee is likely to be highly motivated. She will flourish in the organization and make full use of her distinct competencies. Furthermore, her daily work is likely to be aligned with the mission, vision, values and purposes of the organization.

The key to this appreciative perspective regarding an employee's motivation resides in the career planning and career ladder programs being offered by this employee's organization. Every appreciative organization should provide some type of opportunity for each employee to meet with a career planner at least twice per year. During this meeting she will talk with the planner about the relationship between her own career aspirations and the mission, vision, values and purposes of the organization. This career planner is never the employee's direct supervisor nor even the supervisor or anyone else directly up the hierarchical structure. Rather the career planner should assume the role of friendly aunt or wise uncle—a person who offers an empathetic and thoughtful ear, but has no vested interest in the employee's future career directions. A mentor or coaching could also provide this career planning service (see discussion in later section of this chapter). There are two additional sources: the Human Resource Department of the organization can offer career planning or this service can be provided by someone who works with a cluster of organizations.

Typically, this career review focuses on the choices the employee must make regarding the developmental initiatives they will take in the near future. Usually, the planner and employee direct their attention to initiatives that will be taken during the coming year. They might consider the employee's decisions regarding training workshops, informal reading, talking with other employees about work, or even enrollment in a formal degree program. In each case, the employee identifies her shifting career aspirations, and talks about ways in which these

aspirations relate to other shifting priorities in her life: family, avocation, non career-related education, recreation, health, and even concerns about core values and sources of meaning in life. The career planner, in turn, represents the interests of the organization and suggests ways in which the employee's personal aspirations overlap with organizational intentions. The career planner also encourages a consideration of ways in which the employee can most effectively realize her own aspirations, while availing herself of the organization's current developmental resources.

Organizations that have made a solid commitment to career planning, and to ongoing human resource development, often assemble a catalog of the developmental resources available to employees. Typically, this catalog includes a listing of all courses being offered during the coming six months or year, a description of mentorship and coaching programs available to employees, and a statement of the organization's policy regarding the reimbursement of tuition for career-related degree programs. Career planners can make extensive use of such a catalog in meeting with an employee, just as they can make effective use of the information that has already been collected regarding the skills and knowledge of the employee for the organization's Human Resource Bank (Chapter Two). We see, once again, how work done on behalf of any one of the six strategies (Assessment) can benefit the work done on behalf of a second strategy (Development). The interconnectivity and interdependence of these strategies adds value and vitality to the overall plan for human resource management in a 21<sup>st</sup> Century organization.

An appreciative perspective also adds value and vitality to an organization when career planners consistently apply this perspective while assisting employees with their career planning. This is where the concept of career ladders enters the picture. Often the developmental programs of a 20<sup>th</sup> Century organization were devoted primarily to remedial services. After participating in an initial orientation program, employees were expected to need little additional training or education, unless they received a major promotion or were assigned to a quite different operation in the organization. If the employee did need more training or education then something was wrong. Further participation in developmental programs suggested that the employee was not fully oriented in the first place or is not now capable of fulfilling the responsibilities of their current job—hence the need for more training or education.

Several years ago I was asked to conduct an expensive five-day training program for mid-managers in a large corporation. This training program focused on team-building and

interpersonal skills training. It was intended for promising mid-managers—the men and women whom the organization looked to as future leaders. Yet, I sensed widespread anxiety when these future leaders arrived at the training site. The participants seemed to be resentful and were initially very reticent about engaging in any of the training activities. I was very disappointed in the quality of work these mid-managers were producing.

This state of affairs lasted for several days, at which time I confronted them about performance. A candid exchange of information ensued. They told me about their expectations for this workshop. To my great surprise, I discovered that many of them had no expectations at all regarding the workshop. They were given no reasons for being selected. Typically, these mid-managers were ordered to attend the program and were not given any choice in the matter. Many of the participants thought they were being sent because they had done “something wrong” and were being “corrected” by me and other members of the training staff. No wonder they were resentful and resistant to participating in this workshop! Even when I told them that they were being sent because of their successes, not their failures, many of the participants were hesitant to participate. They simply did not believe that I was telling them the truth. In the past, they knew that “this type of training program” was only given to employees who had “problems.” They could not get their heads or hearts around the appreciative notion that this program should be considered a reward rather than a punishment.

Fortunately, I had the opportunity to conduct more workshops for this corporation with other aspiring mid-managers. Before agreeing to do these additional workshops, I firmly requested that the supervisors of all managers attending the workshop clearly indicate to their subordinates that this workshop was being offered to the best and brightest managers, not to the “worst and dumbest,” as one manager at the first workshop declared. This second workshop was a vast improvement over the first. Participants were highly motivated and eager to learn.

I still marvel at the failure of this corporation to acknowledge that these workshop participants were selected because they were among the best managers in the organization. Were they worried about future salary negotiations; about how other managers would view their exclusion from the workshop; about the lack of clear criteria for selecting the best and brightest? Was this nothing more than a popularity contest? These are all legitimate reasons for being careful about conducting career-advancing workshops. I found, however, that these weren't the primary reasons for this corporation's failure to recognize the successes of their managers. The primary

reason concerned the absence of any form of appreciation in this organization. Appreciation was simply not in its blood or culture.

This is not an isolated case. I have found appreciation lacking in the culture of many organizations. I now ask workshop participants how they were chosen when I begin most corporate programs. Inevitably, a large majority of the participants assume that they are being sent for remedial work, even though I refuse to conduct workshops that are meant for repair rather than growth. We still live in a world that views developmental initiatives as a sign of failure! Most leaders still see little need for ongoing training and education, despite all their declarations regarding the value of organizational learning. *An appreciative approach to career planning is essential if training and education are to be viewed as opportunity rather than punishment.*

What does such an approach look like? First, an appreciative career planner helps the employee see how his organization's developmental initiatives compliment strengths he already manifests. It does little good for an employee to move directly into an area of inadequacy that is filled with anxiety and self-doubt. Areas of great challenge should always be intermixed with areas of strength and support. For instance, an employee might be fearful of computers and other forms of electronic technology. This is not uncommon in our digitalized world. This employee should not be pushed into a software applications course. Rather, if this employee is interpersonally skillful he might serve as a mentor or coach to a techno-nerd. These two employees can gently teach one another something about their way of being in the world. If our computer-phobic employee is skillful at marketing, then he might work with someone from information technology in designing and setting up a program to market IT training programs inside the organization. This employee can use his own fear of computers as a test case in designing convincing marketing strategies. He might even convince himself that certain forms of computer training would be of some value.

The career planner guides employees toward areas of improvement, but always through their strengths and areas of vital interest and enthusiasm. This is the first key to an appreciative approach to career planning: *lead from your strong suit.* The metaphor of career ladder enters at this point. The employee is climbing up the ladder. At the top of the ladder we find the employee's personal career aspirations. The rungs of the ladder represent developmental programs in which the employee participates. Each program builds on the strengths of the

employee and enables the employee to lift herself to a highly level of achievement in the organization. The career ladder is a self-empowering model of development that is fully compatible with the other five leadership strategies, and in particular, Assessment (Human Resource Bank), Chartering (organizational intentions) and empowerment (sequential movement of teams through improvements in communication, conflict-management, problem solving and decision-making).

The second key to an appreciative perspective on career planning lies outside the purview of career planning. This second key resides at the heart of what I have been illustrating in this section: *focus on success*. Training and education should always be viewed first and foremost as a reward and an acknowledgment of success. It should never be featured as a resource for remedial work. If an organization's program of employee development gains this remedial reputation then it ceases to be of much value to either the employees who need assistance or the employees who are already successful. An appreciative program of employee development will be face saving for those employees who do need remedial assistance, as well as a source of support and encouragement for those employees who are making full use of their distinctive competencies.

### **Strategy Five: Mentoring and Coaching**

Many sources of learning exist for employees. They learn from their successes and failures in addressing daily problems and from formal training and education. They also learn from their one-on-one interactions with significant people in their life: family members, friends and those people with whom they work closely. Professional helpers are also available: therapist, pastors, counselors, and consultants. In recent years, many employees have turned to mentors and coaches for assistance in meeting the complex, unpredictable and turbulent challenges of 21<sup>st</sup> Century organizational life.

In considering ways in which an organization can foster employee development through mentoring and coaching, I differentiate between the informal assistance that is provided by colleagues to one another on a daily basis and the skilled mentoring and coaching services provided to employees as part of a formal HRD program. Informal services may consist of nothing more than the caring assistance which one colleague provides to another colleague: a look of encouragement during a particularly difficult meeting or a few words of advice prior to

difficult confrontation with a subordinate. While organizational leaders and human resource managers can't mandate this type of assistance, they can help to create a supportive and appreciative culture in their organization that fosters interpersonal care. They can also help to formalize this support through the creation of peer-based mentoring and coaching program.

The mentoring of younger employees by older employees certainly is not a new idea. Mentoring played a central role in the apprenticeship programs of the craft guilds during the pre-industrial and early industrial eras. Today, mentoring can take many forms. First, it can be used not only in the establishment of a formal helping relationship between older and younger employees, but also in the formation of helping relationships among peers, especially when one of the peers is engaged in a major career transition. The peer mentor is not necessarily older or wiser than the person they are mentoring. Typically, they have gone through a similar transition in the recent or distant past and can empathize with the person they are mentoring. Mentorship can also be established to help challenge an employee who wishes to change something about the way she is now operating in her job. Alternatively, the mentor can serve as an informational resource, providing the person being mentored with just-in-time knowledge about rules and regulations, appropriate data sources, existing models for a new program initiative and so forth.

Regardless of the form that mentoring takes, it usually is typified by three characteristics. First, it is an *informal relationship*. This means that meetings between the mentor and person being mentored are of varying length and occur in a variety of different places. The agenda for these meetings are set by the two participants and are readily adjusted given the emerging concerns and interests of both parties. Second, the interactions between the mentor and person being mentored are *confidential*. It is essential that the person being mentored consider this relationship to be a sanctuary. The person being mentored frequently uses this opportunity to explore his own fears, struggles and aspirations. Thus, the mentor should never be the supervisor of an employee, nor anyone else who might be involved in any evaluation of the employee's performance. As I noted above, the mentor serves in the role of favorite uncle or aunt, rather than in the parental role. Third, the person being mentored controls the mentoring relationship. The mentoring process is *self-regulating*. The effective mentor neither imposed an agenda on the person being mentored nor serves in a heavy advise-giving mode. The mentor is there to support, to inform when asked, and to serve as a guide and witness to their colleague's growth and development.

Coaching is similar to mentoring in all three of these respects. It differs from mentoring, however, in its *focus on specific issues and problems* being faced by the person being coached. Furthermore, while, mentoring is usually unfocused and long-term, coaching tends to be both focused and *time-limited*. In that way, coaching more closely resembles the consultation strategy (Strategy Seven). Coaching, however, is to be clearly distinguished from consulting (and from therapy and counseling) in several important respects. To understand these distinctions, I will first provide a brief description of both the consulting and counseling roles, and then describe the role played by the coach in contemporary organizations.

Professionals with specific expertise, academic degrees and licenses in specific fields or disciplines usually provide consulting and counseling services. A certified accountant, professor of business or organizational psychologist usually provides consulting, while mental health professionals typically provide counseling. Coaching can be provided either by a trained professional or by a knowledgeable and skillful colleague. Coaching bridges the gap between informal working relationships, friendship and mentoring relationship, on the one hand, and consulting and counseling, on the other hand. Unlike either a consultant or counselor, a person providing coaching to someone can readily switch roles, if both people wish, and can become a recipient of the other person's coaching. Roles are flexible and at times fluid. The primary role of the coach is to expand the availability of valid and useful information to her colleague. The coach also helps her colleague make informed decisions or take informed actions based on this information and a thoughtful consideration of all viable options.

While clear distinctions must be drawn between the roles of counseling, consulting and coaching, in reality, these three roles often overlap. In some cases, we find that two or all three of these roles are blended in a single initiative. In other cases, the person who serves in a helping role will shift from one role to another, depending on the needs and roles played by her colleague. While there is considerable overlap between coaching, counseling and consulting, there also are some clear demarcations. For instance, Sperry states that: "coaching primarily involves the teaching of skills in the context of a personal relationship with a learner."<sup>ii</sup> Furthermore, coaching "is the most useful means of teaching human relations skills." He distinguishes coaching from counseling and consultation: coaching does not require a deep level of self-disclosure on the part of the employee nor is there a need for a close personal bond coupled with confidentiality. Coaches, according to Sperry, provide feedback to their clients with

respect to their performance in a number of different settings. Coaching can also be employed as a means of team building.

This brief introduction to both mentoring and coaching will have to suffice in this broad survey of strategies for promoting employee development. A much fuller description of coaching is to be found in *Executive Coaching: An Appreciative Approach*, which I co-authored with Ken Merritt and Steve Phillips. The *Professional Coaches and Mentors Association* is also an excellent source of information about both of these approaches to employee development. Before leaving these approaches there is one additional point to be made. This concerns the ways in which mentoring and coaching activities are supported by the organization. Are mentors and coaches paid for their services or are they compensated in some other manner? There is presently no one widely accepted policy with regard to this issue. In some organizations, mentors and coaches are paid. This is particularly the case with coaching, especially when the coach comes from outside the organization.

It is interesting to note that the funds for paid coaching services often do not come from the organization's training or education budget. Rather, coaching is often treated as a component of the employee benefit program. Hence it is placed in the same budget category as health insurance, disability and retirement funds and Employee Assistance Programs. This is worth keeping in mind, especially if a HR director wishes to establish a coaching program but is strapped for HRD funds. This director may wish to redefine the coaching services as an employee benefit and seek funding from this different and often much larger pool of money.

Mentors and internal coaches are usually not paid directly for their services. Typically, there is no direct pay for services rendered; rather, the mentors and coaches inside most organizations are compensated indirectly, if at all. As in the case of employees who are asked to take a few days off from their current job to provide some training, the mentor or internal coach is often given some release time to provide the services. It is assumed, in such cases, that the mentor or coach will benefit the organization through the provision of these services. Furthermore, mentoring and peer coaching programs yield the same indirect benefits as peer-based training programs: the employee who is providing the mentoring or coaching will often learn as much or more than the employee who is receiving the mentoring or coaching services.

The honor that comes with being identified as a mentor or coach is often quite motivating for an employee who is being recognized and appreciated in this role. Frequently, mentors and

coaches inside an organization are further honored with a semi-annual or annual banquet. Leaders of the organization express their gratitude and employees that are being served by the mentors or coaches express their appreciation for the assistance they have received. The mentor or coach might be given a special badge or uniform designating their honored status. This latter strategy is often engaged in service industries, such as fast-food restaurants, where an older employee, who is often of retirement age, is recruited in part to serve as a senior mentor and trainer to the teenage members of the work force.

In a few instances, the mentor or internal coach is compensated for the services she renders. The mentor or coach might be paid overtime for these services or she might receive additional vacation days if she is providing the mentoring or coaching services during non-work hours. Alternatively, the mentor or coach might receive a bonus. This bonus is often tied to the direct documentation of benefit to the employee being served or to the organization. A new employee, for instance, might be given an incentive bonus after their six-month probationary period. A portion of this bonus might, in turn, be paid to their mentor or coach. A mentor or coach might be paid a bonus that is equal to a certain proportion of the salary increase of the employee she has been serving during a specific period of time. We are also likely to see internal mentoring and coaching in the future being tied to profit sharing and stock-option plans—for mentoring and coaching ultimately benefit an organization in many unanticipated ways that impact the organization's long-term viability.

### **Strategy Six: Discussions about Work**

This strategy reflects the traditions of many organizations regarding the value of dialogue and deliberation. It is readily embraced by and rarely threatening to many employees. Practitioners who employ this strategy usually assume that employees entering into in-depth discussions about their work will gain a more mature perspective of their job performance as a result of these discussions. Employees will also acquire a more explicitly defined set of concepts about the ways in which they might most effectively operate in relationship to other employees.<sup>iii</sup> If the discussions are held over an extended period of time with the assistance of a trained leader, they may produce significant personal or professional change. Nevitt Sanford and his colleagues in Berkeley, for instance, found that they could have a profound impact on faculty members simply by interviewing them about their work. I have similarly observed that the simple use of

interviews with employees in many different kinds of organizations can make a clear and long-lasting difference. An appreciative perspective is critical. The discussions about work should lead to greater understanding of the complex dynamics that occur in the workplace, as well as increased appreciation for the role played by other employees in the organization.

### **Strategy Seven: Consultation**

The consultation-based HRD strategy seems, on first acquaintance, to be similar to the training strategy. However, there are distinct and important differences between the two. The consultation model does not begin with an assumption that training is always an important aspect of change. As a matter of fact, at least one consultative model begins by rejecting the basic assumption concerning the desirability of change itself. At the very least, an appreciative perspective on consultation challenges the assumption that there is something wrong with the current organization that must be corrected or changed.

An experienced practitioner who makes use of a consultation-based approach to human resource development will not begin with any well-developed preconceptions about what the problems are in the organization. She will usually make extensive use of information collection, analysis, and feedback—after having taken the most critical and often controversial step in the consultative process: identification of the client. Who is the client: the department head, the president, the trustees or board directors, the employees? The client, once identified, will define the goals of the program. Given the necessary responsiveness of a consultant to her client, no one sequence of activities can be defined as being typical of this strategy. Only in the case of the entry point is there a common pattern among consultants. Prior to any consultative intervention, some clarification of the client's problem usually occurs, along with the establishment of a preliminary contract in which the obligations and expectations of both client and consultant are spelled out in some detail.

Many consultative processes are basically a recycling between information collection and clarification, and contracting between the client and consultant. The primary goal of the consultant in this process is to generate valid and useful information for the client, while increasing the client's options for action. Needless to say, this type of dispassionate, almost detached, process is more difficult to achieve if the consultant is a member of the organization being served. At an early stage, external consultants can usually do a more effective job than can

internal consultants, especially if the external consultant works closely with one or more human resource practitioners who operate from inside the organization.

### **Strategy Eight: Personal and Organization Development**

Personal and organizational development strategies are grouped together because they both emerge from the same model of applied behavioral science. This strategy is founded on a substantial set of theories, models and techniques, beginning with the work of Kurt Lewin in the 1930s and early 1940s. A basic assumption is made that the process, as well as the substance, of change must be planned and managed if change is to be successful and productive. Both the personal and organizational aspects of change are emphasized, with attention being given to such issues as sense of ownership for the change process and the outcomes of this process. Attention is also directed to development of collaborative rather than competitive relationships in the solution of personal and organizational problems, and to recognition of the personal as well as organizational benefits and costs of a specific policy. This strategy tends to place great emphasis on the creation of an organizational climate and culture that is characterized by trust, openness and interdependence. Appreciative perspectives on organizational life can be traced back directly to the optimistic and humanistic roots of this eighth HRD strategy.

The personal and organizational development strategy differs somewhat from the training and consultation strategies in that it is not oriented primarily toward the functional aspects of the organization. Rather, as the name implies, this strategy addresses personal and organizational dynamics—those dimensions of the organization which lie hidden behind such functions as management, program planning and production. Herein lies both the strength and weakness of personal and organization development strategies. In the recognition of personal and organizational dynamics that are common to all human systems, the applied behavioral scientist is able to translate important learning gained in one setting to quite different organizational settings. These practitioners, however, often ignore some of the essential differences between the systems that they serve, and at times neglect the functional problem with which they were initially confronted by the client system. A HRD practitioner, for instance, who indiscriminately uses team-building, process consultation, or life planning will often find that his client grows impatient in waiting for a more direct response to an entry problem that is likely to be defined in terms of functional issues. The client wants a management problem concerning employee

attrition to be solved or the client is looking for an answer to a technical question concerning a newly installed network.

### **Strategy Nine: Equipment**

Many of the major attempts in the recent past to improve the quality and effectiveness of work have focused on the acquisition of new equipment, such as computers, measurement instrumentation, facsimile systems, and electronic mail. While these new pieces of equipment often create more problems than they solve, the purchase of equipment is sometimes essential. An emphasis on equipment purchase can be a viable entry-level strategy, particularly when used in large, technologically oriented organizations—provided it is coupled with an effective training and promotion program.

The equipment strategy clearly reflects the more general technological bias held by many members of our society. We assume that many social problems, like physical problems, can be solved through technological innovation and dissemination. If we can send a man to the moon, so the argument goes, then we should be able to develop and distribute equipment that will increase the efficiency as well as the quality of work being done in our organizations. The methods and concepts embraced by this strategy focus on the invention, innovative use, and dissemination of technology. Many of the people who embrace this strategy are fully aware of the personal and professional problems associated with these phases of technological change.<sup>iv</sup> Thus, the strategies of training, consultation and organization development may be effectively employed in conjunction with this equipment strategy. Without this expanded conceptualization, technological dreams that many hold will never be fulfilled.

### **Strategy Ten: Promotion of a Specific Method or Technology**

This final strategy has been widely used in recent years in conjunction with new approaches to strategic planning, problem solving, time management and interpersonal communication. It also has been used to promote the use of new computer software and hardware and, more generally, to encourage the expanded use of many different digital technologies. The specific methods or technologies being promoted are assumed to offer at least partial answers to the daily problems encountered by employees in the organization. The new time management procedure will increase productivity, while the new computer network improves program coordination and

inter-departmental communications. This is the principle strength of this strategy: it relates to the immediate, identified needs of the client.

The sequence of strategies involving method and technology promotion usually leads from an emphasis on acceptance and implementation of a specific method or technology to some sort of outcome evaluation regarding this method or technology. Personal and organizational development strategies are generally only important to the extent that they provide support for the personal and organizational acceptance of the method or technology being promoted. In many cases, newly published resources (for example, instructional manuals, computer programs, video-recordings, CDs) are developed as part of the process of promoting the use of a specific method or technology. If this material becomes extensive, a resource bank will often be established as part of the promotion of a specific method or technology. An assumption is made that people will change if they are given the resources and expertise to implement the selected method or technology.

This final HRD strategy, like many of the others I have identified, resembles the training and education strategy. There are usually workshops, seminars, books and articles, and video-recordings associated with this strategy, just as there are with the training and education strategy. A major distinction needs to be drawn, however, with regard to desired outcomes. Training and education programs are concerned primarily with the acquisition of new skills and knowledge, whereas this tenth strategy is concerned with shifts in attitudes regarding a new method or technology. Both strategies are seeking to change aptitudes; however, trainers and educators are concerned mostly with the skill and knowledge elements of the aptitude equation, whereas promoters of new methods and technology are concerned with the motivational element of this equation.

This distinction between the first and tenth strategies is important—and it is a distinction that is often lost upon those leaders who wish to introduce a major change in their organization. When they offer workshops, seminars or printed material regarding the change, is the primary intention to shift attitudes among employees about this change, or is the primary intention one of equipping employees with new skills and knowledge, so that they might successfully implement the change? This question usually can't be answered until there is an even deeper appreciation for the sources of potential resistance to the change. Are employees fearful about the change because they don't recognize the benefits to be derived from this change? If this is the case, then

this tenth strategy should be implemented. If employees are resistant not because they can't see the benefits, but because they don't know how to implement the change, then the training and education strategy should be employed. Obviously, in some cases, both strategies are needed.

Method or technology promotion also differs from the training strategy in that the primary focus is on a specific procedure or technology. The skills, knowledge and aptitudes being offered in a training or education program are portable. Typically, they can be taken to another job or even another organization. By contrast, the attitudes being addressed in a promotional program tend to be anchored in the specific context and climate of the organization where the program is being offered. This is yet another reason to draw a distinction between the promotion strategy and the training and education strategy.

External resources can readily be used in preparing a training and education program, for the skills and knowledge usually are generic. Promotional and motivational resources are another matter entirely. They must be based on a deep appreciation of the unique interests, needs and fears of the employees to which these resources are addressed. In addition, it is important that these promotional resources are directly and consistently aligned with the distinctive intentions of the organization—as articulated in the organization's charter (see Chapter Four).

Professionally produced videotapes about a new computer software program that are bought from the company producing the software rarely have much of an impact. Very few people usually watch these pre-packaged programs. Conversely, many employees will watch less elegant videotapes that are produced inside the organization showing the use of this software program by employees. The impact is even greater if this videotape contains informal and candid testimonials from credible employees that identify the benefits to be derived from this new software program. Research on the successful diffusion of innovations always points to the impact of local opinion leaders.<sup>v</sup>

## **Concluding Comments**

Presently, human resource development is a domain of organizational life with many disciples, detractors, prophets and princes. At times many HRD strategies appear to be fads. The strategies I have identified certainly are not panaceas, nor will they ever solve many of the complex problems facing 21<sup>st</sup> Century organizations. HRD strategies will have little or no impact if they are isolated from or set against other vital issues confronting an organization. Yet, human

resource development can have a profound and lasting impact on the lives of all members of the organization—if it is systematically and patiently implemented as part of a comprehensive and appreciative program of organizational renewal.

Perhaps the one thing held in common by previous approaches to human resource development is a failure to reach many of the organization's leaders. New approaches to human resource development, such as I have described in this chapter, must become part of a larger appreciative process. When this happens, human resource development will find its appropriate place as a major force for improving the quality of work being done in today's organizations. A danger exists, however, in making human resource development part of a larger program of organizational growth and development: incorporation can lead to diffusion and even elimination. Just as the central purposes of any organization can become lost or neglected in the press of committee meetings, office politics, and marketing position, so too can human resource development become lost in institutional goal setting or administrative reorganization.

The processes of human resource development, as they involve any person or organization, are always subtle and ill defined. One should be amazed that any significant change or development ever takes place and should feel gratified if this development has in part been attributable to one's own efforts. Some change in the attitudes and performance of employees has taken place. These changes are based on a greater appreciation on the part of an employee for their own distinctive competencies. Employees find their jobs to be more gratifying than in the past. These outcomes are sufficient justification, in and of themselves, for a program of human resource development. However, an appreciative program that is successful may impact on the organization in ways that are not anticipated. If such is the case, then our efforts at human resource development may play a greater role in releasing the human capital of our organization than any of us could hope or imagine.

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<sup>i</sup> Edgar Schein, *Career Dynamics*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1978.

<sup>ii</sup> Len Sperry, "Working with Executives: Consulting, Counseling, and Coaching," *Individual Psychology*, 1993, 49, p. 257.

<sup>iii</sup> See further, Chris Argyris and Donald Schon, *Theory in Practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1974; Chris Argyris, *Reasoning, Learning and Action*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1982.

<sup>iv</sup> See further, Donald A. Schon, *Technology and Change: The New Heraclitus*. New York: Delacorte, 1969; Everett Rogers. *Diffusion of Innovation*. (4rd ed.) New York: Free Press, 1995.

<sup>v</sup> Everett Rogers. *Diffusion of Innovation*. (4th ed.) New York: Free Press, 1995.