What do Transformational Change consultants actually do?

An invitation to researchers to revision Organization Development.

Would you like to be “matched” with a successful organization development consultant to study what s/he actually does to promote transformational change in organizations? Would you like to create a community of practical scholars and scholarly practitioners interested in grappling with the underlying theory of planned, transformational change?

There is a growing gap between the change practices successful transformational change practitioners use and the conventional change models found in organizational development textbooks. The conventional action research change model is based on a modernist mindset where the targets of change “participate” in an empirical examination of their system in order to “diagnose” and “prescribe” improvements (Bushe & Marshak, 2009). Yet more than half the methods described in The Change Handbook (Holman, Devane & Cady, 2007) don’t follow this paradigm.

Most written descriptions of newer change models (where they exist) are written by consultants primarily for marketing purposes. Although many appear to rest on post enlightenment assumptions (Bushe & Marshak, 2009) the underlying theories of change and the philosophical assumptions they rest on are rarely explicated. As a result the field grows ever more fragmented.

To address this problem, the Revisioning OD Project is looking for scholars and researchers who are interested in exploring the practices of successful transformational change consultants and explicate the theoretical basis and theories of action underlying their effectiveness. The first step is to generate a pool of case studies with attached commentaries.

Dr. Gervase Bushe, Professor of Leadership and Organization Development at the Beedie School of Business, Simon Fraser University, is asking you to contact him and let him know of your interest. In an effort to keep this simple and doable, the effort will begin with a focus on the United States and Canada. He has received assurances of support from the OD Network and NTL to aid in finding consultants willing to be studied. All academics, researchers and doctoral students are invited to join. He will attempt to match you up with a full time consultant in your geographical area. You will negotiate how you will go about studying what that consultant does with the consultant. A rudimentary set of questions all case studies are requested to answer will be provided to you, and you can certainly go beyond those. Your commitment is to write up what you see and hear, and what you think about what you see and hear, and contribute this to a pool of “case studies and commentaries”. Everyone who contributes to the pool will have access to the pool. It’s expected this project will lead to journal articles and an edited volume of papers.

Anyone outside North America who has good contacts into the local consulting community who would like to coordinate the project in their locale is invited to contact Gervase as well.

To register your interest and get more information send an email to bushe@sfu.ca with the words Revisioning OD Project in the subject line.
