one of the critical skills needed to be successful in the field of OD is the ability to tell a meaningful story with data. Although not delivering the answer per se, the OD practitioner does need to be able to convey the key findings from the data in a manner that brings the client along. This represents one of the unique aspects of the OD approach compared with other consulting models where the answer is clearly recommended during the feedback process. Organizational development practitioners are much more likely to suggest ideas and work together with their clients through the issues as a part of the feedback process. The focus here is delivering a compelling story that creates a need for change and a direction for that change. The discussion during the feedback stage is what leads to the selection of the appropriate intervention.

**Intervention**

The intervention phase involves determining together the appropriate solution based on the data fed back and a shared understanding of its implications. The important point to remember here is that regardless of what intervention is chosen, the determination should be based on the issues identified in the data, and what the practitioner and client think will result in the most impact. This shared approach drives client ownership and commitment, which is critical to ensuring success of the OD change effort.

**Evaluation**

The last stage of an OD effort is a formal evaluation process. Although often overlooked by many consultants, it is a crucial step for both the client and the practitioner. From the client’s perspective, it is helpful toward quantifying the successful outcome of the effort. From the OD practitioner’s perspective, it represents both a measure of success and a key source of learning and development.

**SUMMARY**

In sum, the theory and practice of OD represents a data-driven, systemic thinking, and values-based approach to helping improve organizations and the people that work in them. Fundamentally, the OD consulting model is collaborative in nature and grounded in data-based information.

—Allan Church

**FURTHER READING**


**ORGANIZATIONAL IMAGE**

Organizational image refers to people’s global impressions of an organization; it is defined as people’s loose structures of knowledge and beliefs about an organization. Organizational image represents the net cognitive reactions and associations of customers, investors, employees, and applicants to an organization’s name. Accordingly, it serves as a template to categorize, store, and recall organization-related information.

It should be noted that there is no such thing as the organization’s image because an organization typically has multiple images. These multiple images result from various groups (also known as stakeholders or corporate audiences) holding different images of the same organization. At least, one might distinguish among the following organizational images. First, investors and executives hold an image of an organization as an economic performer. These investors typically rely on factual economic figures as a basis of their beliefs about the organization. Second, there is the image of an organization as a social performer in the general society (also known as corporate social performance). Third, customers or clients hold an image of an organization as a provider of goods and services. Fourth, each organization has an image as an employer among current employees and (potential) applicants (also known as company employment image or employer image). This is the image that is assessed in rankings such as *Fortune* magazine’s "The
100 Best Companies to Work For.” These multiple organizational images might not always coincide. For example, the firm’s image as an employer as held by either employees or job seekers might be different from its image as a provider of goods and services in the minds of customers or clients.

Organizational images typically develop over longer periods of time. They result from, among other things, media coverage, individual or group sensemaking, and communication on the part of the organization (as reflected in an organization’s advertising, sponsorships, and publicity). However, it should be clear that organizational images are not static. Specifically, organizations often audit their images. In these image audits, the aim is to carefully determine which factors make up the image among various stakeholders. Next, organizations aim to strategically modify the image held by these stakeholders. For example, this might be done by increasing an organization’s exposure or by highlighting specific attributes in advertising campaigns.

COMPONENTS OF IMAGE

Generally, two components can be distinguished in an organization’s image. First, people typically associate some objective attributes with an organization. These attributes might vary from factual or historical aspects of organizations to organizational procedures and policies. For example, in terms of a company’s image as an employer, research has confirmed that applicants might have some knowledge about the attributes of the organization and the job that they might consider applying for. Examples include size, location, level of centralization, pay, benefits, type of work to be performed, advancement opportunities, and career programs.

A second part of people’s general impressions of an organization refers to trait-related inferences. Trait inferences about organizations are different from the aforementioned objective company-related information for two reasons. First, trait inferences describe the organization in terms of subjective, abstract, and intangible attributes. Second, they convey symbolic company information in the form of imagery that people assign to organizations. For example, in terms of a company’s image as an employer, research has discovered that applicants reliably and meaningfully ascribe traits to organizations. They refer to some employing organizations as trendy, whereas other employing organizations are seen as prestigious.

Similar results have been found in research on consumers’ image of the organization as a provider of products and services.

CONSEQUENCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL IMAGE

An organization’s image plays a central role because what various stakeholders know about an organization considerably influences how they respond to the organization. In fact, an organization’s image might have various potentially favorable consequences for the organization and its main stakeholders.

First, there might be effects on investment decisions. Specifically, firms with a good image might have a competitive leverage in terms of attracting and keeping new investors. Second, it has been found that an organization’s image exerts effects on consumers’ product choices. In this context, an organization’s image might serve as a signal of product quality and might enable an organization to distinguish itself from its main competitors. Third, an organization’s image seems to affect people’s attraction to an organization as a place to work. This is especially the case in early recruitment stages as potential applicants have only a rudimentary knowledge of the key job and organizational attributes. Hence, potential applicants mainly rely on their general impressions of the firm (i.e., image) when deciding to apply for a job. The general effect is that employer image influences the quantity and quality of the applicant pool of an organization in that organizations with a good image are able to attract more and better applicants. Apart from these general effects on applicant quantity and quality, applicants’ view of the image of an employer also has long-lasting effects on other recruitment stages. Specifically, impressions of an organization as an employer measured in early recruitment stages are strong predictors of applicants’ attraction measured in later recruitment stages, such as after a campus interview, which in turn is related to applicants’ final job acceptance decisions. A fourth group of studies have examined the consequences of organizational image on employees’ attitudes and behaviors toward their organization. For example, employees also uses an organization’s image as a mirror of how others are judging them. Moreover, an organization’s image has been found to be important to employees’ sense of self. If an employee holds the company in low regard, the person has lower job satisfaction and a higher
probability of leaving the organization. Conversely, if the company is held in high regard by the employee and others, job satisfaction is higher and turnover intention is lower. In this case an employee also wants to be associated with the positive image of the organization and feels proud to belong to that organization. Finally, there is evidence that firms on the best 100 list enjoy organizational performance advantages over the broad market and a matched sample of firms. In other words, organizational image seems to enhance the competitive ability of the firm.

RELATED CONSTRUCTS

Organizational image is closely related to other constructs such as organizational reputation and organizational identity. However, there are also some differences. In particular, organizational reputation refers to people's beliefs about the general public's affective evaluation of the organization. Organizational reputation differs from organizational image in that reputation entails an affective component (a loose set of feelings associated with an organization), whereas image is mainly cognitively oriented (a loose set of knowledge and beliefs about an organization). Another difference is that reputation refers to people's assessment of how others (the general public) feel about the organization, whereas image deals with a person's own beliefs.

Another related construct is an organization's perceived identity. The key difference between an organization's identity and its image is that an organization's identity is what insiders in the organization (employees) perceive to be the organization's central, enduring, and distinctive characteristics. Conversely, image and reputation deal with outsiders' (applicants, customers) views and feelings.

—Filip Lievens

See also Person–Organization Fit; Self-Concept Theory of Work Motivation

FURTHER READING


ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE

Organizational justice refers to individual or collective judgments of fairness or ethical propriety. Investigations of organizational justice tend to take a descriptive approach. As such, an event is treated as fair or unfair to the extent that one believes it to be so. In other words, justice research is concerned with identifying the antecedents that influence fairness judgments, as well as the consequences once such an evaluation has been made. Notice that this descriptive approach does not tell organizations what really is fair, only what people believe to be just. This empirical perspective complements the normative frameworks beneficially employed by philosophers whose prescriptive approach typically attempts to ascertain what is objectively right or wrong by using reasoned analysis.

The sense of justice has a strong impact on workers' behavior and attitudes. For example, perceived fairness promotes such benefits as organizational commitment, effective job performance, and increased organizational citizenship behavior. Justice also helps alleviate many of the ill effects of dysfunctional work environments. For example, perceived fairness reduces workplace stress, vindictive retaliation, employee withdrawal, and sabotage.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF JUSTICE

Generally speaking, judgments of fairness can be said to have three targets: