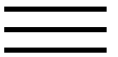


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## Organizational Dynamics

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*If organization development practitioners want to sleep better at night, they need to live the basic values of their profession, challenge actions they know are immoral, and play a more expansive role in improving organizational life.*

# The New Agenda for Organization Development

W. WARNER BURKE

**F**ounded on a value base circa 1960 that emanated from the human relations movement, in general, and the sensitivity training (T group) movement, in particular, organization development (OD) has always operated within a framework of humanistic and ethical concerns for people. Although not all practitioners would agree on the specific values that guide the field, most would concur that OD has tended to emphasize such concerns as:

**Human development**—It is worthwhile for people in organizations to have opportunities for personal learning and for growth toward a full realization of their individual potentials.

**Fairness**—It is important that people in organizations are treated equitably without discrimination and with dignity.

**Openness**—It is imperative that communication in organizations be conducted with forthrightness, honesty, and integrity.

**Choice**—It is critical that people in organizations are free from coercion and the arbitrary use of authority.

**Balance of autonomy and constraint**—It is significant that people in organizations have autonomy and freedom to perform their work responsibilities as they see fit, yet exe-

cute these responsibilities within reasonable organizational constraints. The OD practitioner's responsibility is to see that these two forces—autonomy and constraint—are in balance.

While this list may fall short of expressing the value system that guides OD, it likely comes close. The problem we face today is not so much agreeing on the specifics, but rather living the values we do espouse.

A number of senior practitioners in OD, i.e., those with 20 or more years of experience, believe that the profession has lost its way—that its values are no longer sufficiently honored, much less practiced, and that the unrelenting emphasis on the bottom line has taken over. Moreover, such management techniques—fads, if you will—as reengineering and downsizing have taken the country by storm, hurt people, and violated the values associated with OD. In the meantime, OD practitioners have stood on the sidelines and watched—or themselves become victims. Regardless of how valid these observations may be, it does seem true that OD has lost some of its power, its presence, and perhaps its perspective.

The purpose of this paper, then, is to address some of these issues, first by examining

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