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# OD Interventions in Change Management

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## INTRODUCTION

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OD Intervention is one of the most important techniques available today, for achieving planned change in organizations. Organizational Development (OD) is a planned, systematic, top-down approach at the organization level that can apply any of several change techniques. As it is known to work through active Interventions, the focus is on the OD Intervention as a tool of Organizational Development.

The significant role of Change Coalitions in current work environments is also examined. A new Method – the OD Coalition Intervention©, is proposed as an effective combination of change techniques.

## WHAT IS AN OD INTERVENTION?

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OD Intervention refers to a structured activity that is performed for an organization by individuals or groups based on a goal or objective, such as improving the performance of a work group.

## OTHER DEFINITIONS OF OD INTERVENTION

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*Every action that influences an organization's improvement program in a change agent-client system relationship can be said to be an intervention. (Johnson, 1976)*

*Intervening in the system aims to resolve difficulties, remove hurdles and provide momentum to increase the effectiveness of the organization. (Dwivedi)*

*An intervention is a set of sequenced and planned actions or events intended to help the organization increase its effectiveness.*

## PURPOSES OF OD INTERVENTION

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Organizations apply interventions for many purposes. The following key points have been recognized--

- Performance and Productivity Improvement
- Improving Employee and Organizational Effectiveness
- To foster open communication, trust and confidence in intra group and inter-group relationships. This may involve changing mindsets and perceptions that would come into play as group influences.
- To encourage participative management by increasing employee involvement and participation in the management process. (Likert, 1967 proposed frameworks for

organizational effectiveness based on which he recognized these four management systems: 1. Exploitative Authoritative, 2. Benevolent Authoritative, 3. Consultative, and 4. Participative).

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### MORE VIEWS ON APPLICATIONS OF OD INTERVENTION

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- Depending on the strategy adopted for an intervention, the focus may be on the Learning process, or the Human element or other areas. The impact of intervention would be felt accordingly- for example, in the learning process.
- For Crisis Intervention. It can play a significant role in crisis management where following a rapid diagnosis, active measures are usually required in a short time frame.
- In general, as a Change Assessment mechanism. The company may have undergone a change that was not planned. Now they want to survey the situation and assess the impact of change.
- Control and Improvement of Processes- the process breaks out of outdated patterns and controls, transitioning into more effective dynamics and optimized controls.
- Innovation
- Problem solving and Decision Making

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### ELEMENTS OF OD INTERVENTION

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The following elements can be found in a typical Intervention Process-

1. Change Agent(s)- the Change Agent is the *Intervener*. This resource may initiate the change program. Or can be introduced at any point to assess the effects of a change program or to implement parts of a planned change exercise. In case Internal or External Consultants are involved, they may act as Change Agents in the process.
2. Change or Intervention Target(s)- "Who does it seek to change?"
3. Organization stakeholder(s)- the organization leader(s) and sponsor(s) involved in this OD technique as initiators and decision makers.
4. Client System- Depending on the scope of intervention this can refer to the organization hosting the intervention and more specifically, the environment in which it is held. "Where does it take place?"
5. Intervention Goal(s)- "What does it achieve or accomplish?"
6. Intervention Participant(s)- At the group level, this would include participants in the

process such as individual(s) and work teams; and the organization Management who play an active part in the process.

7. Units of Change- This would answer the question, "At what level does the Change intervention work?" For example, the change can be aimed at the work team as a unit.

## TYPES OF OD INTERVENTION

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In practice, Interventions may be directed at the individual, group or organization level. Methods for classifying them vary, with some that are not too rigid in their definition. A popular classification is based on what type of process it targets, and another on what type of work tasks are involved.

The following characteristics are recommended to distinguish an OD Intervention as a highly specialized technique: It is an OD Technique (therefore planned, structured and applies Behavioral Science); it is focused and goal-directed; is based on valid information; involves change agent(s), the client system and the organization; and in case of Change interventions, it involves change.

## INSTANCES OF OD INTERVENTION

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The following initiatives can be viewed as forms of intervention- team building, coaching, Large Group Interventions, mentoring, performance appraisal, downsizing, TQM, and leadership development, Training, Questionnaires, Kaizen. It can cover a lot of initiatives planned by the company including Process Improvement and Management Consulting projects, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Placement initiatives.

Classifications of OD Intervention based on the type of process that it targets (Cummings & Worley)

1. Human Process
2. Techno-structural
3. Human Resource
4. Strategic

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### 1. HUMAN PROCESS INTERVENTION

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These are aimed at the social processes that occur among the members of an organization (Cummings & Worley, 2005). It pertains to communication, decision making, leadership and group dynamics. Within this category, there are T-Groups, Process Consultations, Third Party interventions and Team Building.

- I. In T-Groups, psychological techniques are applied to change the attitudes and behavior of individuals. Thus members get experiential learning based on which to improve their leadership skills, interpersonal and group relationships. The method by which group members are required to have open discussions over facilitated group sessions is also known as *Sensitivity Training*.
- II. In Process Consultation- It deals with group processes including communication, functional roles, problem solving and decision making, group norms, leadership and authority. The process consultant advises the client on how to understand, perceive and act on process events in order to improve the situation.
- III. Third Party interventions focus on preventing and resolving conflicts between individuals or groups. Conflicts can arise from substantive or interpersonal issues.
- IV. Team Building- Companies regard this as an important tool. The intervention enables Team members to work together, building a more collaborative culture so they can work efficiently toward group goals. It may involve overcoming hurdles such as interpersonal friction, apathy or de-motivation.

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## 2. TECHNO-STRUCTURAL INTERVENTION

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This deals with work/job design and high-involvement organizational issues with emphasis on increasing efficiency and productivity. It involves making changes in the organization structure, as traditionally hierarchical structures give way to more flexible ones that can prove to be more profitable and adaptive. It can include re-organization of work groups and activities. Program types- Formal structural change, differentiation and integration, Total Quality Management (TQM), and Work design. Intervention examples are downsizing and business process re-engineering (BPR).

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## 3. HUMAN RESOURCE INTERVENTION

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Practices in the Human Resource Management function are involved here. It targets Processes that affect individual employees, including Performance management and evaluation, Reward systems, Employee Wellness and Career planning. Processes related to HR Management policies such as Workforce diversity can also be impacted.

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## 4. STRATEGIC INTERVENTION

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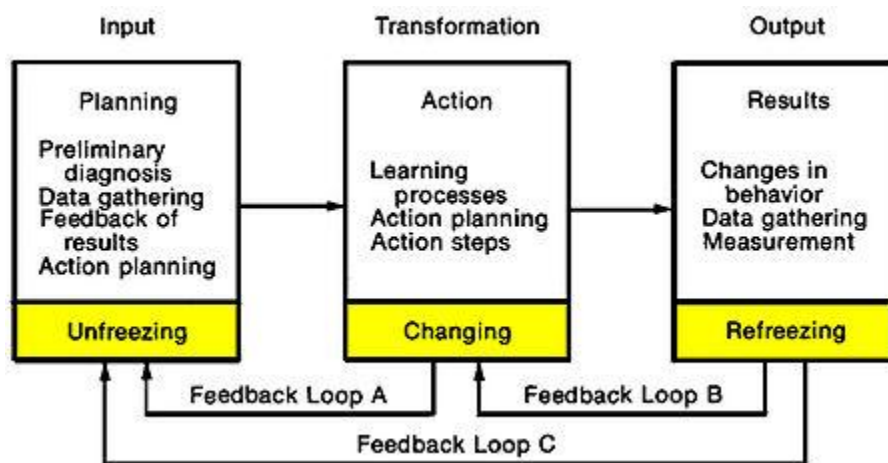
Such interventions deal with strategic issues, enabling the organization to gain a competitive edge in the market. Solutions can involve developing the core strengths and resources of the organization; entering into alliances, mergers & acquisitions or partnerships that can position its product or service more effectively in the external environment. But as it is always important to align internal forces with strategy, it can also involve changes in the corporate culture.

Basic steps in strategic intervention start with Strategic Analysis, Strategy Formulation, followed by the strategic change plan and Implementation. Eight steps have been suggested for Strategy implementation (Thomas and Strickland, 2003). Usually, techniques such as Industry and Market Analysis, Competitor Analysis and Situation Analysis (SWOT) help toward formulating the strategy. The OD intervener may apply a combination of industry and custom methods to arrive at the best strategy.

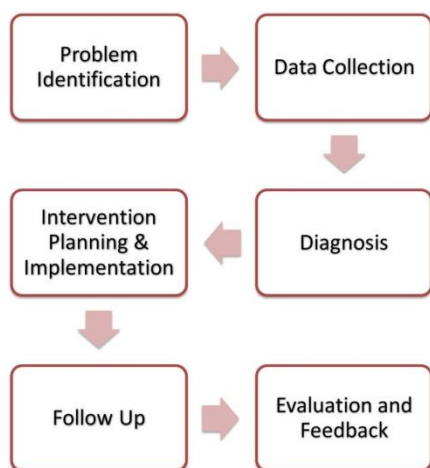
## THE OD INTERVENTION PROCESS

The OD Action Research Model - Refer Figure 1 which has been an important basis for Change Management approaches over the years.

FIGURE 1 SYSTEMS MODEL OF ACTION RESEARCH PROCESS (KURT LEWIN, 1951)



Refer Figure 2 OD Process Steps<sup>1</sup> with the steps in a generic OD Process including intervention. Figure 2 OD PROCESS STEPS



<sup>1</sup> Reference: various sources

## INTERVENTION OUTSIDE OD

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The intervention word is defined in one source as, *“Interference so as to modify a process or situation “*.

Intervention processes in their fundamental form have far-reaching applications in many different fields. It can be a therapeutic tool to make positive changes at the socio-cultural level; and to help people cope with the many erratic demands of modern living. It plays an important role in Psychological Counseling and related areas- for dealing with personal or family crises, stress and behavioral disorders.

Intervention can be understood as a guided, structured process that requires initiative, involves assessment and systematic diagnosis, and finally benefits all participant groups. In a world caught between the necessity and avoidance of change, this technique provides us methodical ways to prepare, adjust, implement and absorb it. One could say that with intervention performed correctly, *you can't go wrong!*

As expected, there would be risks associated with wrongly conducted interventions; but then the worst-case scenario is nothing more than an ineffective waste of time. There would be benefits even in such cases, in terms of the learning and situational awareness one has gained. This applies especially in case of Human process and related interventions.

## BARRIERS TO OD INTERVENTION

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The following factors are indicative of the Resistance to OD Interventions. In order to plan a successful intervention the nature and strength of these barriers should be assessed.

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### RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

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With OD Interventions being viewed primarily as planned change, factors that resist change can be taken as valid indicators for assessing resistance, in most cases. And just as Change can happen at the individual, group and organization level, the resistance to it can be felt at these levels and must be dealt with. Refer Figure 3. Potential Sources of Change Resistance<sup>2</sup> (Page 7)

The other dimension is the internal vs. external forces generally identified for causing change. It is suggested that some external forces can cause it as well as act as resistance sources- directly or indirectly inhibiting change in the organization. For example, restrictive Government policies and trade practices can delay or obstruct change; or, government policy and regulation changes can at times lead to change.

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<sup>2</sup> Reference: Various sources



Intervention resistance can be gauged from the same factors that enter an impending change scenario. For example, the need to overcome slow learning curves and team inertia prior to a group training exercise.

According to this paper, in certain cases the resistance to intervention can be different from *change resistance*. Here intervention has to deal with the effects of another process e.g. when counseling is provided before downsizing. In this case the degree of resistance to the Change intervention- the counseling, may be low but to the Change itself i.e. downsizing, can be very high.

FIGURE 3



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### BUY-IN FROM ORGANIZATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

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The organization must make a decision to launch an OD intervention. Problem Identification being the first step in the OD Process, awareness and acknowledgement of the problem would encounter resistance unless the pressure for change is so high that it cannot be ignored.

Following this the management may enter a decision making process with the objective of deciding whether to have an Intervention. Possibly starting with the business proposal, an end-to-end analysis of the proposed intervention plan would be undertaken. It can be expected to include feasibility studies, a risk assessment, and various decision models including a cost benefit analysis and ROI. If the decision is made a consensus would have to be reached and approval obtained from all stakeholders; for example, in strategic cases from all the departments.

As suggested in this paper, the above is a critical step which is likely to encounter resistance from sources at the management and organization level. The degree of efficiency, collaboration, alignment and on the other hand- inertia in the client organization would play a major role. A decision-friendly culture and an active decision making environment would work to minimize “decision resistance”.

In summary, the forces that resist (or, support) change in the organization can exist almost entirely as influences. An organization that starts considering Change, is still considering an abstraction. But when the organization agrees to intervention, it agrees to visible and measurable instances of change.

## SUPPORTING FACTORS FOR OD INTERVENTION

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Forces that lead to Organizational Change can be found in the internal and external environment. There are influences at the organizational, group and individual levels that can drive change. While some factors including structural inertia only work against, others such as group dynamics can push for or against change.

### 1. EXTERNAL FORCES FOR CHANGE

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The following external factors are known to trigger significant changes and corresponding OD interventions- Globalization, Economic and Market conditions, Technology changes, Competition, Government policies, Industry practices, Rules and regulations.

### 2. INTERNAL CAUSES FOR OD INTERVENTION

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Internally, there are positive or negative factors that can lead to Change Intervention as listed below.

i. Crisis

An organization facing a crisis has to take firm action to manage it in a short time frame. Thus crises act as a powerful though undesirable change driver.

ii. Reduction in Performance and Productivity

A decrease in these factors including reduced revenue that adversely impact profitability can alert the management to various problems. It can force the management to take initiatives for example- cost-cutting measures, identifying new revenue streams, improving sales and marketing operations or diagnosing and correcting other internal problem sources.

iii. Discoveries and Innovation

In the reverse of scenario ii- a dramatic rise in productivity or a new product

discovery can also trigger intervention, as one would expect to standardize and market the innovation.

- iv. Human Resource and Workforce factors  
Employee related changes may be initiated to curb attrition, retain talented employees and develop employee relations.

### 3. OTHER CAUSES FOR OD INTERVENTION

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These are also regarded in this paper as Internal causal factors, though not as high impact as those listed above; and in some cases they are ineffective as the change may not happen.

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#### I. ABNORMAL ENVIRONMENTAL DYNAMICS

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Consider highly dysfunctional work environments characterized by- Low performance, friction and negativity, with uncontrollable or disruptive processes. In a dynamic work environment, conditions approaching the above state would be observed, assessed and corrected promptly.

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#### II. LEGITIMATE CHANGE COALITIONS IN THE ORGANIZATION

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Modern business environments are more encouraging of employees who want to “speak out” about problems. Rather than enforcing a culture of fear they want to improve communication. In progressive cases, Management may even work in parallel to evolve solutions to employee problems and institutionalize them. In spite of these growing positive trends, it is not uncommon to find instances of problems getting ignored completely; or attempts for change encountering negative reactions.

In cases where change resistance is high and change is not allowed, groups and individuals may be forced to fall back on other unplanned options. A contemporary situation considered here, *is when they form coalitions or informal groups, and agitate or push for the changes they want through legitimate political tactics.* This refers to political actions as well as work tasks, all of which may be regarded as relevant criteria toward getting the organization to make the required change.

An individual may push for change *(i) alone*; alternatively, resort to *(ii) radical or illegitimate behavior.* In the (i) individual case unless a coalition is formed in due course, the individual may give up the change attempt or continue alone. The individual tends to be an ineffective change trigger, with exceptions while the (ii) radical variation would be actively discouraged and hence short-lived.

It is mainly the *legitimate change coalitions* that are allowed to survive in the organization. But there may not be much organizational support for the changes they seek. Since it is *not regarded as an official or formal change mechanism*, and usually has *no direct involvement*

from Management, the view held in this paper is that it may not lead to any tangible change, especially in cases where the support is low.

The difference between *types of change coalitions* should be clarified. In general, *coalitions* are known as informal and temporary groups that may get formed for different purposes. They may work on change projects including initiatives driven and supported by top Management. They are expected to work toward the change while overcoming resistance.

In contrast, the change coalitions considered in this situation are groups with *less power and influence*; who start with *no direct support* for their initiatives; making it necessary for them to agitate for change, constructively.

The above situation can be found in a variety of environments ranging from dysfunctional to those having moderate-to-highly efficient management processes and controls.

Strange as it may seem, even organizations with well-managed environments permit such *change attempts*. Individuals are allowed to form coalitions and agitate, to varying extents. Influential groups and political influences are allowed to play for change. Organizational justification for it is based on the view that these are *functional conflicts* and have positive effects on the work environment.

#### **Positive effects of legitimate Change Coalitions in a Functional Conflict situation-**

1. Increased competition and accelerated pace of work
2. Fosters Team building and better integration
3. Initiates the *possibility* of slow, gradual and incremental changes
4. Coalitions can mobilize influences

However, there are several *drawbacks* to this situation.

- i. Because it is *informal*; lacks management involvement; and in the presence of many environmental controls, the change intervention will never happen or at best, happen *slowly*. Note that in such cases the organization has *not planned* for the change at any step.
- ii. Moreover, it can lead to high stress situations for individuals and also reduce job satisfaction, with Risk-reward ratios being high.
- iii. There is waste of time in cases where organizations have not planned to leverage the other benefits in terms of higher performance and competition.
- iv. A dominant part of coalition tactics tend to be political in nature, in the context of organizational politics. It encourages political behavior which can be counter-productive at certain levels. Quality of work can be impacted since the focus is now on the *play*, with emphasis having shifted away from the *change* itself to the dynamics of *playing for change*.

- v. The most detrimental effect is that such *change attempts* can perpetuate as *repetitive work patterns and habits*. If one requires a change to be made, then instead of resorting to the change management processes that most companies should have at their disposal, one is habituated to take the route of informal patterns that in many cases, *never* result in *timely intervention*. And official change mechanisms never get worked on and tested as they should.

The conclusion reached here is that while *legitimate change coalitions* play an important role in current work environments and may lead to gradual and incremental changes; the *functional conflict situations* involving these *coalitions* have *reduced effectiveness* for triggering organizational change interventions; and also found to have *various drawbacks* associated with them.

### Exceptions

- i. However there are situations where such mechanisms do work effectively, which is in the external socio-political context. To trigger social change in the absence of officially functional support structures, people have no recourse but to agitate through coalitions. One can understand that this is how coalition patterns originated. But again, this paper does not recommend it as the best change solution when it comes to modern organizational environments.
- ii. There could be other coalition types, for example Task-based coalitions. Coalitions within the given conflict situation pertain to change coalitions.

## SOLUTION- THE OD COALITION INTERVENTION© METHOD

The solution forwarded is designed to be an effective combination of change techniques and mechanisms. It combines OD Intervention with legitimate Change Coalitions. The latter will be referred to as *Initial Change Coalitions*.

The resulting method is termed as the OD Coalition-Intervention Method©. It implies that by default, OD Interventions must be introduced at some point in the lifecycle of the functional Conflict. The following key characteristics are identified for it:-

### STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS OF THE OD COALITION- INTERVENTION

- A. Initial Change Coalition or Individual
  - B. Organizational Stakeholders
  - C. Supporting groups
  - D. Obstructing groups
1. The method demands higher activity and diligence from the main participants as follows.
    - i. The Coalition must actively make efforts for change intervention.

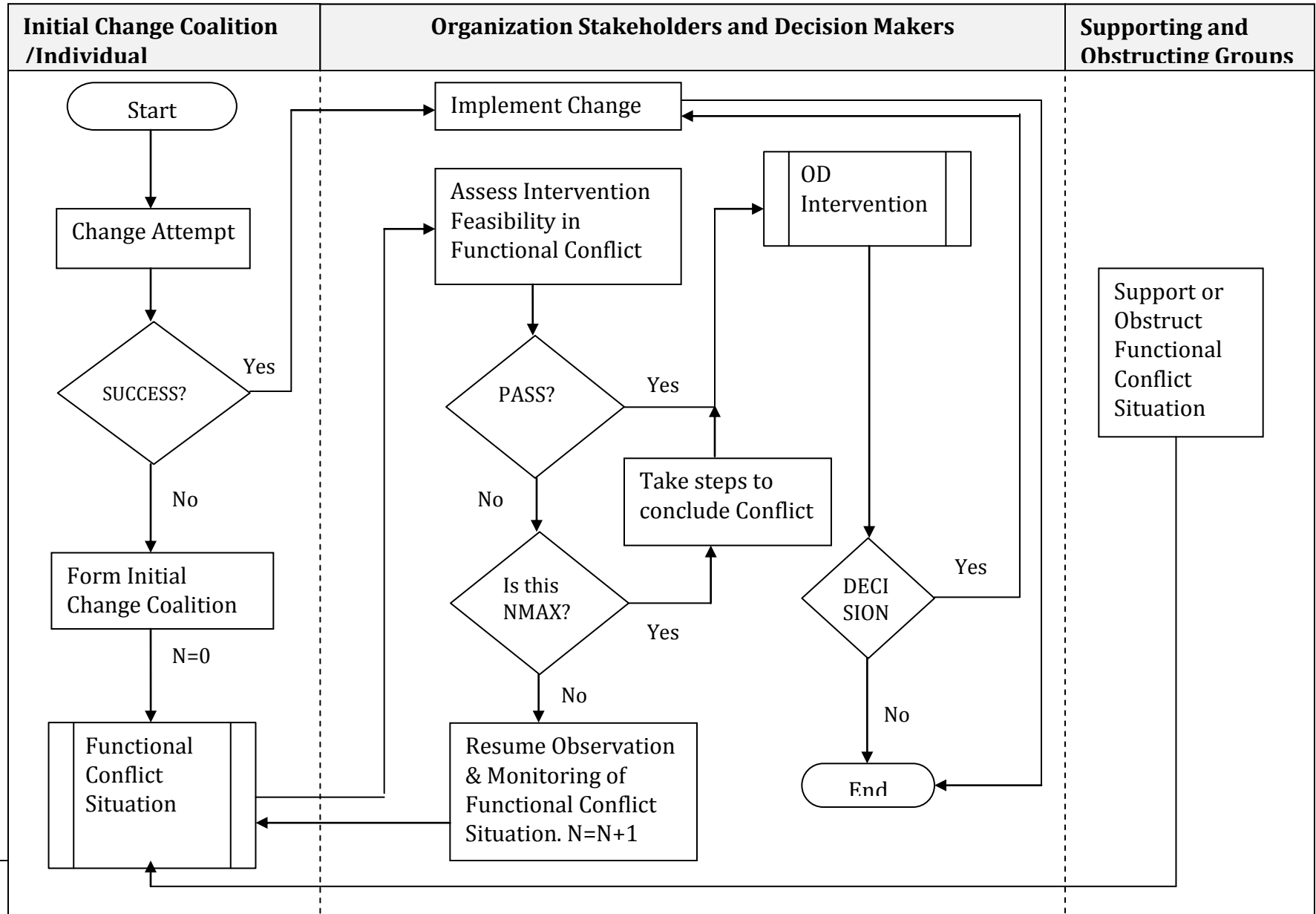
- ii. Organizational stakeholders must actively and periodically, assess the situation to determine if it merits Change Intervention and then provide it. Various objective criteria may be applied to determine the value and relevance of the coalition's efforts in the organization and more importantly, the value and feasibility of the change it seeks.
- iii. Other participants- Supporting and Obstructing groups may be formal or informal, internal or external. They play secondary roles in supporting or impeding the change attempt. They are not required to make official efforts but they can.
- iv. It is not expected to be a static structure as coalitions can grow or contract; and secondary groups can undergo changes. For example- In a progressive scenario, the support groups would grow.

## 2. Process Steps:-

- i. Similar to the previous Change Coalition functional conflict dynamics- the change initiator(s) having failed at an initial change attempt due to strong resistance in the organization then forms a change coalition and enters a functional conflict situation. Secondary supporting and obstructing groups may enter at this point or in later cycles.
- ii. Again, the conflict involves the Coalition pushing forward, logically arguing and exerting influences to enable the change. And in this initial phase of conflict some or all the Organization stakeholders push back against the change, finding logical arguments and driving influences against it.
- iii. The departure from the previous case is in the organization taking a continuous observation and monitoring stance to the conflict; and at optimal points conducting interactive assessments of the situation based on best practices. The assessment objective is to check for intervention feasibility.
- iv. Suitable assessment points can be scheduled either based on a plan schedule or at signs of progress in the group's efforts. An assessment is expected to be brief but accurate and should take up minimal time and resources.
- v. At an assessment the organization may find based on valid assessment criteria that the situation, though working to benefit the environment, is still not ready for intervention. So it is deferred; the conflict is allowed to resume and the monitoring/ observation phase also resumes until the next assessment. The coalition gets post-assessment feedback that it may use to adjust its tactics.
- vi. Else, instead of v. if the conflict passes assessment, it gives the green signal for an intervention to be conducted.

- vii. If the assessment reveals that the conflict is evidently sub-standard and a waste of resources, the coalition gets feedback to conclude the conflict. In this case also an intervention is recommended.
- viii. Having entered the intervention phase, this would include rigorous steps to check the value and feasibility of the change in detail, applying the required expertise and authority to make objective decisions for or against.
- ix. Refer Figure 4 which shows the Lifecycle of the OD Coalition Intervention Process (Page 14).
- x. In a meritorious case the intervention will decide and implement the change.
- xi. In the sub-standard 'fail' case it will not permit the change. It may instead provide counseling, or training to raise the standards to required levels. .
- xii. Unlike the previous scenario in which a conflict can continue indefinitely, based on this method the organization must compulsorily, at some point—a. reward or b. conclude the conflict and in either case, launch the intervention.
  - a. "Reward" would be in the form of some positive reinforcement; the coalition would get an intervention to decide whether not the change goal(s) should be satisfied.
  - b. In certain cases the conflict may continue even after implementing the change goal(s) through intervention, providing all key participants agree. For example, a few group members work well, passing the assessment while others are sub-standard. The former get change intervention while the others revert to trying for it.
  - c. Concluding it would end the conflict entirely.
- xiii. Reconsidering the case of an individual initiating a change attempt- though not a coalition, the method does accommodate this possibility.
  - a. Some or all phases including the intervention can involve only one person agitating for change instead of two or more.
  - b. Assessment and change decision criteria should not be based on whether it is an individual or a group, but on the value provided by the group/individual and the proposed change.
  - c. The method considers the line between individual and group states to be blurred as it may be transient. For example- the individual initiator, based on assessment feedback, forms a coalition. But it is loose-knit and breaks up just before intervention, reverting to the individual.

Figure 4 OD Coalition Intervention Process





- xiv. In retrospect, timely action being a critical success factor for an effective intervention, the method places a time constraint on the change attempt and conflict based on which the Conflict→Assessment→Conflict iterative phase cannot be prolonged. Similarly, Management involvement- another success factor is also introduced gradually through assessments.
- xv. The process is not isolated. It can interface with other existing processes in the organization. For example, intervention starts by providing counseling sessions then connects to the existing Training function; and routes back into the intervention to assess post-training results.
- xvi. This is designed to be a lean process that minimizes time and resource wastage.
- xvii. Refer an Example case on Page 16 that demonstrates the real world application of OD Coalition Intervention.

TABLE 1 EFFECT OF OD COALITION INTERVENTION ON FUNCTIONAL CONFLICT SITUATION

Prior State of Change Coalition	WITH OD Coalition Intervention
Change coalitions in functional conflict situations play a significant role in the organization, with many positive effects	The method helps the organization to support and enhance the positive effects and goal(s) of the change coalition, without over-controlling, or suppressing
Can continue indefinitely	Places time constraint on the situation
No Management involvement	Improves quality and decision making by involving Management
May bypass formal change mechanisms in the company	Assessment and intervention have to involve best practices, organizational processes and change mechanisms
In rare cases, the situation may wind down into a stagnant state or spiral into uncontrollable, disruptive processes, both counter-productive	Places optimal checks and controls on the situation while allowing progress.
In certain cases lack of organizational support and interest can lead to discouraging growth and innovation in the group.	Management involvement would ensure that any ideas and innovations by group members are duly recognized and encouraged, not suppressed.
Organizational stakeholders may not act or decide on a matter indefinitely	Stakeholders have to respond based on a formal program schedule- this drastically reduces bureaucratic and autocratic inertia

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## OD COALITION INTERVENTION - EXAMPLE

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*The example case provided below is fictional and bears no resemblance to any real person, event or entity.*

### **Case: Intra-Company Job Change**

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#### A. BACKGROUND

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Lakshmi works as a Software Engineer in the Systems Integration/IT department of a large software company. Having worked in this position about a year, the Performance Appraisal has given an above average rating based on skills entered for her job role, two months ago.

She has been seeking a transfer to the Marketing department as a mid to senior level Analyst for the last four months. As she tried to explain during the appraisal process, she wants to move out of IT and into this role as her creative writing, research and analysis skills are outstanding and she is extremely interested in Marketing as a career.

The HR system comprises Performance Management and Skills assessment modules for evaluating current job skills, in addition to other core functions. But the overall system lacks functionality to process job transition and related decisions. Lakshmi's request for a job role change could not be processed as part of this appraisal.

Following the appraisal, Lakshmi continued to pursue her job change effort by initiating a few discussions with her IT supervisor, writing to the HR Manager and Marketing Department Head. At the final discussion last month her supervisor informed her that the Management cannot even begin to consider the matter until the next Appraisal (10 months away). He was also disapproving of her efforts to move out of IT, suggesting she try to find areas within IT itself that may sustain her interest, such as Technical writing.

The IT Department offers a highly competitive benefits and remuneration package. This is the first request for a transfer out of IT and cross-departmental moves are rare. The Marketing department only has a few specialized staff unlike IT, though they have several ongoing projects.

The other two departments did not respond to Lakshmi's communication. No action has been taken.

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#### B. CHANGE COALITION

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Feeling demotivated over the status quo, Lakshmi starts talking to her lunch time group about her problems. The group consists of 3-4 mid-level employees a few of whom are long-time employees and have contacts in various departments. Lakshmi tells them she will have to quit the job unless she gets the transfer. She may decide to take a course in

Marketing then re-try for a Marketing job; but this circuitous move would de-stabilize her financially and professionally at a time when her expenses are high.

Hearing her distress the friends circle is responsive. They advise her not to quit, suggesting she network and talk to people about her interest in Marketing. One of them knows the Administrative Officer in Marketing, and offers to find out about departmental vacancies from her. As the talk proceeds, her circle becomes increasingly motivated and starts identifying with their “mission” to help with Lakshmi’s job change. They brainstorm, explore various options, and agree to follow up with regular updates on their progress.

Lakshmi feels encouraged by the support. Acting on their advice she initiates contact with a few Marketing personnel; and enrolls for a weekend diploma course in Marketing. Over the next 3-4 months- She has received a certificate of excellence from the course and sent a copy with another letter to the Head of Marketing and the HR Manager.

Her discussions with the Marketing staff had a positive outcome. She was asked to pitch in and contribute on a short assignment that required market research and writing, and her help was appreciated.

In the meantime, Lakshmi’s friends have been creating a buzz about her literary talent. Having gained popularity for her creative writing, Lakshmi is asked to write a column for the Company Newsletter. Technical writing assignments have also come her way though she does not view it as an area of interest. Following the Marketing course completion she has received a few external interview calls for part time jobs in Sales & Marketing.

Six months since her friends circle initiated efforts- There is no official change in the situation regarding Lakshmi’s request for a formal job transfer out of IT into Marketing. There was no response to her written requests from either HR or Marketing Management.

Finding herself locked in a static situation and with job dissatisfaction at an all time high, Lakshmi starts writing her resignation letter.

### C. OD COALITION INTERVENTION

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The HR Manager and Marketing Dept. Head have both read about the new OD Coalition Intervention method and want to apply it in the company. At the Management Meeting the HR Manager announces their plan to ‘test pilot’ innovative Organizational Development techniques as part of their latest initiative. The announcement meets with no objection.

After scanning Employee records, HR personnel select Lakshmi’s profile based on her job transfer requests. She is selected along with a few other candidates and the program is initiated. HR Management holds a discussion with Lakshmi to assess the situation. They learn about her various efforts over the past few months to prove her aptitude in the preferred job role.

The next assessment session is between HR and Marketing Management to understand their viewpoint regarding the situation. The exchange reveals a major reason for their ignoring her request- they are not convinced she can do the job, given the perceived differences in skills between IT and Marketing.

The second reason, not explicitly discussed is based on the company's policy and organizational influences. Information Technology is the company's core vertical and pivotal function. The management is wary of employees moving out of IT and setting the wrong precedent.

HR then tries to schedule an assessment session with IT; but IT Management refuse to attend, indicating their disapproval of the candidate's job change request as well as skepticism regarding the utility of the new OD technique that was initiated by the HR Dept.

HR concludes their first assessment check by providing clear feedback to Lakshmi- the outcome is not positive. She has not proven her Marketing competencies conclusively; she was hired as an IT resource and the company expects her to continue working in this role.

However, Lakshmi is not discouraged this time. She finds Management is taking some interest in understanding her problems and this motivates her. She counters that she would like to keep contributing, if possible, on more Marketing assignments to prove her superior aptitude. She is confident of providing outstanding value to the company as an Analyst in Marketing but in the meantime she will continue to do her best in IT. Furthermore, she is willing to sign up for a full-fledged Marketing MBA on a distance learning program if and when they agree to transfer her.

HR Management seem impressed with her can-do; they do not discourage her but do not commit to any decision. She is told they will be tracking her progress and will let her know in case of any developments. In the meantime, she must continue in IT as before.

Lakshmi diligently pursues the discussed course of action. In the following weeks she has been given more Marketing assignments, and has done a good job; and is also completing her IT work regularly.

The IT Dept. has just launched a "rival" initiative- evidently in a race with HR, to build innovative Technology frameworks. Lakshmi is given peripheral but time-consuming support work on this project and is forced to work overtime to juggle all these tasks.

One month later, HR suggests a second assessment session as part of the OD program schedule, to both Marketing and IT stakeholders. Marketing is ready to join the discussion but IT declines, again. HR proceeds to hold a formal assessment with available participants.

Unable to reach a decision since IT has chosen not to participate, after the assessment they resume their monitoring and observation phase.

One month later, all departments have started preparing for the year's performance appraisal. Based on Management by Objectives (MBO) practices, Lakshmi has to enter the key performance areas for her work tasks online, ahead of goal setting. She finds that unlike last year, now she has tangible cross-functional work output to enter from Marketing. But the system lacks functionality to record any of it. Promptly, Lakshmi escalates this gap, reporting it to the HR Dept., with the suggestion that they add a new module for Career Planning.

Everyone is busy with the pre-appraisal process but the HR Manager has time to conduct one more brief assessment as per their plan, again trying to get IT Management to attend. And this time, they agree!

The collaboration between HR, Marketing and IT had drastically improved over the last few days. IT Management and HR have agreed to launch a collaborative project to enhance the HRMS with new systems for Career Planning and Career Development. The proposal will be presented at the next Management Meeting. It will mean new projects in the IT portfolio. Given the current importance and popularity of HR Career Management solutions in industry, IT and HR will jointly design, develop and implement these components internally. Then they may consider its application externally as well, marketing it to clients as add-on services.

All parties attend this assessment discussion, agreeing that based on the data, the situation indicates significant progress. The plan of action is decided. (In effect, assessment has given way to intervention). HR will initiate the Job Change Workflow. It will go through the required IT, Marketing and other approvals. Workflow decisions will take into account Performance Appraisal results and cross-functional tasks.

In the absence of required decision systems and interfaces, parts of the process including the end-to-end Career Planning, will be executed manually for current purposes. It will be recorded as requirements for future projects in system redesign, process improvement, and new product development to be undertaken in the company.

The Performance Appraisal was held as planned and the decision outcome for the job change request was provided at the end of it.

Lakshmi's job move was approved. It was officially recorded as a temporary job change. She will be working in Marketing henceforth and the job change will be made permanent, based on her performance. Career Development measures will include mapping out her career path and tracking her performance in the new Job role; in-house training on relevant skills; and job rotation if required.

From Initiation to Intervention, the OD Coalition Intervention took three months. The change attempt was regarded as successful.

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## CONCLUSION

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As workplaces go through evolutionary and revolutionary change cycles, some problems will be resolved and many others won't- they will be left to resolve themselves, or for the next decade. But the new decade will bring its own onslaught of newer, stranger, tougher problems to deal with—and we'll wish we were better prepared with more initiatives and effective solutions.

If you start searching for specific Management areas that enable action through application of logical and rational methods in the face of persistent inertia and inaction, then sooner or later you will come across OD. OD Interventions actually have “breaking status quo” on their agenda! Feeling thrilled but a bit worried, you delve deeper; and find that it's about controlled and managed change based on best practices, to achieve clear goals for sustainable improvement.

OD practitioners have added a fascinating array of proven techniques to Management over the years, some of which were referenced as part of the paper. And in the true spirit of innovation, a new method - the OD Coalition-Intervention has been proposed by combining existing techniques, with the aim of improving processes and practices in current business environments.

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1. The OD Coalition - Intervention Method©