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From Management Development to Organization Development with *IMpact*

By Henry Mintzberg

It has been said that you should never send a changed person back to an unchanged organization. In management development programs, we always do. That is because we disconnect the learner from the natural context of his or her learning, namely the workplace back home.

As a consequence, much of management development teaches leadership apart from the place where it happens. It is participant-focused. Needed instead is learning that is community-focused, connected to the collective experiences in the workplace, so that we can develop better organizations in the process of developing better managers, rather than just hoping that this will happen as a *consequence* of having developed them. Put differently, what matters is impact: how the learning comes into the organization, beyond the participating manager.

We had been working on this for fifteen years in a family of development programs. We made advances beyond what can be seen in many other programs, but not enough. Only recently did we realize what had been holding this back, in our and other development programs. No matter how much emphasis was given to impact in the classroom, even when some of the managers came in a team from their own organization, when they went back to their own workplaces, each was alone, with no evident way to connect the learning to their context and use it to make changes. This led us to the idea of backing up the managers participating in our programs with teams at home, made up of people they work with every day, not only to help

develop those other people, but also to enable them all to work together to drive changes.

We have labeled this *IMpact*, because it constitutes a pact for development between the manager on the program and his or her team back home. This article explains, first our initial efforts at impact, then how we came to *IMpact*, and finally how this can be used to enhance development in and of organizations.

Self in Silo, or Representative of a Community?

Picture yourself sitting in a classroom, whether at a training facility in the organization or in some public institution such as a management school. You are there to be developed, sent by your organization to become a better manager. Fair enough. But not far enough.

So picture yourself instead as participating there on behalf of your organization, to make it a better place. Replace the image of having been parachuted in, sitting in your silo (*Figure 1*), with that of you as a conduit between your organization and this classroom, to carry your learning back for impact as well as to bring the concerns of your organization into the classroom to work on them with your colleagues (*Figure 2*).

Of course, aside from programs to develop managers, which usually pay less attention to developing their organizations (as in many of the Advanced Management Programs in the prestigious business schools), are programs to develop

Figure 1: Model I – Self in a Development

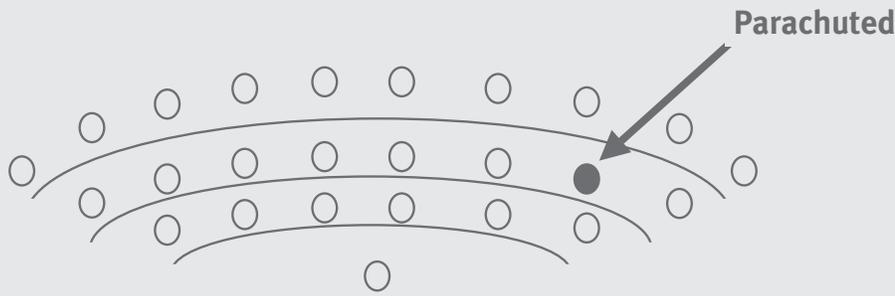
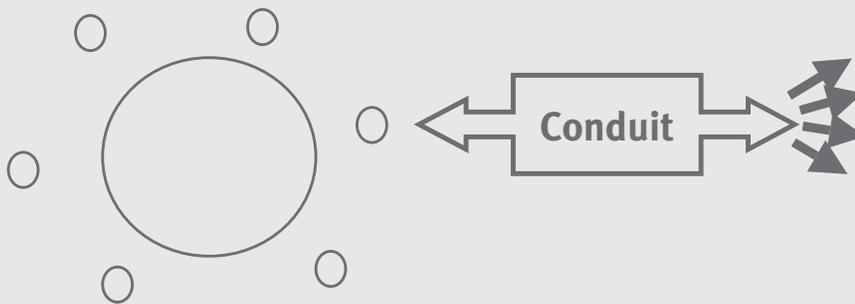


Figure 2: Model II – Representative of a Development Community



the organization, which usually pay less attention to developing the managers in them. Perhaps best known have been General Electric's Work-Out Program (Ulrich & Ashkenas, 2002; Revens, 1983), where a team from a particular unit (such as a factory) gets together to figure out how to render tangible changes on the job. In effect, Work-Out brought the workplace into the classroom, but for organization development, not management development.

So how about programs that do both: develop the organization while developing its managers? Below we discuss a family of programs designed to do that.

The IMPM: Shared Reflection for Management Education and Development

In 1996, questioning the inadequacies of conventional MBA programs (Mintzberg, 2004), a group of us from five universities around the world created the International Masters in Practicing Management (IMPM.org). It had two objectives: to bring management development into what had hitherto been business education,

and to connect this with organization development.

As I have described elsewhere (Mintzberg, 2009), management is a practice, rooted in experience, not a science rooted in analysis or a profession rooted in training. So it makes little sense to try and create managers in a classroom, let alone leaders. What does make sense is to take people who are managers and enhance their practice by encouraging them to learn from their own experience, by reflecting on it personally and sharing such reflections with open-minded colleagues.

Accordingly, the IMPM was designed for managers in practice, who go back and forth between their managing and their learning (in five modules of ten days each, over sixteen months). This enables them to bring fresh experience into the classroom for reflection as well as to carry their insights back to the organization for action. Given how busy most managers are these days, this program set out, insofar as possible, to use their work rather than make more work.

A tiered classroom, in which everyone faces the "instructor," may be good for

discussing a case—other peoples' experience—but not for managers to develop and share insights from their own experience. Hence the IMPM sits its managers at round tables in a flat classroom, to facilitate discussion in small groups, which become communities of social learning in their own right. No need to "break out": the class can switch to small group discussions on a moment's notice—which make up about half the class time. Managers have mostly been sent to the IMPM by their companies, (e.g., Lufthansa, Fujitsu, Panasonic, and LG, for most or all of the past 15 years), often several of them so that they could reflect on common concerns around the tables. We have had considerable success in developing these managers, but organization development has been another story.

IMPact. From the outset, we were determined that the learning of the classroom be carried into the workplace for two kinds of impacts. One is *teaching impact*, meaning that learners in the classroom should be teachers on the job (mentors, coaches, etc.), to diffuse what they learn to others. The other is *action impact*, meaning that the managers should also be driving changes in their organization as a result of what they learn. We labeled these efforts IMPact—*acting on the IMPM*—and instituted a number of components in the program to encourage it:

- » Some time after each module, the managers write a reflection paper to link what they have learned to themselves, their jobs, and/or their organizations. These papers have proved to be surprisingly insightful, and have led to many tangible changes in their organizations.
- » At a number of the modules, the managers undertake one day field studies, visiting facilities of the organizations represented in the classroom, to probe into issues identified by their colleagues from these organizations.
- » Between the second and third modules, the managers pair up and do a managerial exchange, to spend the better part of a week at each others' workplaces, as guest and as host, to enhance their understanding of another managerial world. This has become one of the most popular components of the program.

» Alone or in groups, the managers undertake a venture to make a significant change in their organization or enhance a change already underway. Ventures at Lufthansa, for example, have included setting up a program to mentor senior executives in the use of the internet and redesigning the strategy process for the airline business. Each manager also does a final paper, to probe into some issue, usually related to a concern at work.

to keep his colleagues and family informed of his learning.

» Many of the participants, have, of course, shared particular readings and PowerPoints with colleagues back home, as have some with their reflection papers.

Yet something was still missing. There was a lot of push in this—faculty encouraging impacts—but not enough pull: spontaneous efforts by the managers to change their

have usually lived with all these concerns. And so they are able to help each other work them through, which they do with great enthusiasm. Better than a busman’s holiday!

The details of the ALP are described on *alp-imp.com*, but one example can show both how it works and its potential. A field visit was arranged to the company concerned about motivating its first line employees—a passenger railroad. The friendly consultants bought tickets, rode the trains, interviewed managers at various levels, and so on. They returned home to report that the company did not need to motivate its first-line employees—they were plenty motivated. Rather the suggestion came that it use those employees to further motivate the managers. Asked if she thought the same thing was happening in her own company, one of the friendly consultants answered: “Exactly!”—they just never did a field study at home. Another ALP team from this railroad went on to drive major changes on the issue of customer service (Patwell & Seashore, 2006). So organization development can work fine in a classroom, as General Electric had found out with Work-Out.

In effect, every issue is everyone else’s issue, in the sense that the managers from all the companies have usually lived with all these concerns. And so they are able to help each other work them through, which they do with great enthusiasm. Better than a busman’s holiday!

Some of these components obviously make work—the program does, after all, give a masters degree—but we have designed them (a) to blend into what the managers are doing naturally, and (b) to be as compelling as possible in terms of the managers’ own needs. And these needs have also encouraged the managers to undertake a variety of teaching and action impacts on their own initiative. For example:

- » Two Royal Bank of Canada managers replicated parts of the modules with their staff back home, while at Panasonic some of the module learning was debriefed in “Friday Forums.”
- » An LG manager, upon hearing in the classroom about novel ways to take down the partitions between desks, called home to have this change made before he returned.
- » When returning from a related program,¹ the manager of a Mexican factory installed a round table on its floor so that he and his team could reflect on problems as they arose.
- » A Motorola manager sent “electronic postcards” home during the modules,

organizations. Why should that be so, in this and so many other management development programs? We found out when we reflected on our learning from two other programs that were inspired by the IMPM.

The ALP: Organization Development in the Classroom through Friendly Consulting

We created the Advanced Leadership Program (ALP), to offer an IMPM experience—reflecting at round tables and doing field studies, etc.—to managers who could not spare the time required for a masters program. But in so doing, the focus shifted toward organization development in the classroom.

The ALP invites companies to send teams of six managers—in effect, it offers tables rather than chairs—each with a key issue of concern to the company, for example: How do we motivate our first-line employees and How do we understand and improve decentralization within our organization.

At three modules of one week each, spread over about six months, the managers’ work on these issues within and across their teams, the latter in a process we call *friendly consulting*. In effect, every issue is everyone else’s issue, in the sense that the managers from all the companies

CoachingOurselves.com: Management Development with Organization Development in the Workplace

The second initiative was also inspired by the IMPM, but back in the workplace itself and not by any faculty member or management development person.

The engineering manager of a high technology company in Montreal found that his new managers were struggling with their jobs. Having become familiar with the IMPM (he later did it), he decided to use these ideas on his own. He had no budget for training, or support on this from corporate, so he simply brought his managers together informally over lunch, for about 90 minutes every second week, where they reflected together on their experiences, drawing on conceptual materials from the management literature.

This went on for about two years, with considerable success: members of the

1. *EMBA Roundtables, where managers from EMBA programs around the world get together for a one week IMPM experience* (see www.business-school.exeter.ac.uk/executive/roundtables).

original team created teams of their own, and the teams drove various changes in their workplaces. Eventually, that manager and I founded CoachingOurselves.com, to enable managers from other organizations to do the same thing. They form teams, download topics (seventy are available, on subjects such as Dealing with the Pressures of Managing, Time to Dialogue, Developing Our Organization as a Community), and work together, much as did the first group. Each topic asks the team to pursue the action implications of its learning. Fujitsu, for example, is now using CoachingOurselves to help drive major change in some of its divisions.

So while the ALP program brought the workplace of organization development into the classroom, much as did Work-Out, CoachingOurselves rooted this kind of management and organization development in the workplace. It was but a small though significant step to realize how these advances could be combined with an IMPM-type program to crack the nut of impact.

Back-home *IMPact* teams

In 2009, after an IMPM module, a group of faculty met with HR representatives from two of the companies represented in that class, Kristin Weidenmann of Lufthansa (who oversees the IMPM activity in her company) and Danielle Hudon of Rio Tinto, to brainstorm about these issues. Impact was on our minds, the last day of the module having been spent discussing with the class how to achieve it, including using CoachingOurselves.com as a bridge to the workplace.

During that module, a number of faculty members had used the Lufthansa airline as an example, since three people were there from the company. But after this was done a few times, these managers pointed out that one of them managed in maintenance, another in IT, the third in cargo, and none in the airline itself. They formed a team in the sense that they all worked for Lufthansa, but not in the sense of working in the same place, let alone in the airline aspect itself. Unlike the managers in the

CoachingOurselves teams, they each went back to their own workplace.

Dora Koop of McGill had mused about carrying out the IMPM ventures linked to teams back at work, and at the meeting Danielle Hudon took this a step further, by suggesting that the teams could be established at work to support each of the managers in all their activities in the program. In effect, why not create a virtual team on the job to do the program too, by proxy, through each manager actually in the program? (One gets a degree, the others get certificates.) This would lever-

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age the learning from the classroom into the workplace, and in the process develop six or more people on the job by sending one on the program. Moreover, because these would be teams of people who work together all the time, they could become in their own right potential communities of learning and development, carrying their insights into actions.

As I described in another article (Mintzberg, 2009), small teams at middle management levels may be more effective in changing an organization than forced efforts from the “top.” Such managers are often deeply committed to the enterprise, and sometimes ideally connected as well: close enough to the operations, where ideas often begin (and get lost), yet able to appreciate the big picture. Bear in mind that many a big strategy has grown out of a little initiative, as when a worker at IKEA

had to remove the legs from a table to get it into his car, and so came the revelation about selling unassembled furniture.

Thus was born *IMPact*, a pact between the manager in a learning program and the team he or she designates back at work—of reports, peers, associates, whoever makes the most sense—for management development carried into organization development. This is now being applied in the current IMPM cohort, and early indications are that it has the full potential to address the problem described at the outset of this article.

Getting to Impact

How can other programs move toward impact in combining organization development with management development? A number of the pedagogical elements with which we have been working seem applicable in such programs.

- » The classroom seating is most obvious: having managers sit at round tables in a flat room to explore their learning in small groups can be very effective, without losing any of the possibilities of providing lectures and doing case studies, etc. It simply helps the participants carry the learning into their own contexts. (We have, by the way, used this in conferences with as many as 200 managers.)
- » *IMPact* teams can also be used with any modular program where the managers

go back and forth between the workplace and the classroom. Instead of sending the participating managers back to a disconnected context, it engages colleagues in context on the learning and the changing.

- » We have used CoachingOurselves as a bridge from our classrooms to the IM*act* teams at work. Since many of CoachingOurselves topics mirror concepts presented in the classroom (on crafting strategy, organization design, facilitating communication, etc.), the managers attending the program can use these topics to brief their team back at work. And standing alone, CoachingOurselves brings this pedagogical approach into the workplace directly.
- » Issues of concern that arise at work can be taken into the classroom for friendly consulting, and results of this can be carried back to the workplace for change in the organization.
- » Various IM*act* or CoachingOurselves teams in the same organization can meet in a forum to share their insights and consolidate their learning about the whole organization. OD consultants may be especially helpful in consolidating such learning and encouraging changes as a consequence.
- » Several of the individual elements, such as the managerial exchanges, can be used as programs in their own right.

As I hope I have been able to show, in the development of organizations, a few simple ideas can be carried a long way. Accordingly, isn't it time that we got past the lone wolf view of development, that a changed individual will magically change an organization. The anthropologist Margaret Mead wrote famously: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." Send a changed manager back to a small group of thoughtful, committed colleagues and watch how an organization can be changed too.

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