OrGro

A Model for Organizational Growth

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The OrGro Model

OrGro, a model for significant, meaningful, and durable organizational growth, was developed by integrating findings from neuroscience research, Organizational Development (OD), and Systems Theory and can be used to understand how to motivate and engage individuals throughout the organization. When an organization's visions, goals, and a sense of value are aligned between the leaders and individuals, and when these alignments are practiced by leaders, behaviours can evolve until they are performed reflexively. The new processes become habits embedded in non-declarative memory.

Neuroscience research provides a window into understanding the complexity and challenges of individual change, leadership, and organizational change. An interdisciplinary approach to understanding the challenges of culture change shines light on potential new ways of thinking about organizational transformation. This may provide keys for successful organizational change, with better value to the organization and its customers.

The relevant research from neuroscience, OD, and systems theory was correlated to OrGro, which has the following phases:

1. Goal Orientation

2. Perceived Value

3. Paradigm Shift

4. Results, Reward and Practice

The OD description and the supporting neuroscience for the four phases of OrGro follow.

1. Goal Orientation

Individuals have professional goals and organizations have business goals. These may not be aligned. Staff and executives were asked (in the research behind OrGro) what their personal, professional and organizational goals were and if they had discussed them with one another. Individuals knew their personal and professional goals and organizations frequently document their organizational goals, though few knew or cared about the other's goals.

Leaders incorporating extrinsic goals with intrinsic goals can serve to better motivate individuals (Baumeister, 1991). Intrinsic goals are personally motivated, e.g., I want to win new contracts because it will make me feel more confident about my capabilities. Extrinsic goals serve the organization, e.g., I want to win new contracts to make my organization better.

Leaders that understand the intrinsic and extrinsic goals of their staff can communicate the organization's goals in personally meaningful ways in order to motivate the individuals. Change cannot be created or forced, i.e., "…*change will only happen if the person has a desire to change"* (Ochsner, 2011). Ochsner also states that behavioral change requires individual ownership of the behavior, commitment to change, and, "*…the identification and employment of strategies to enact the top down thought system to train and control the habitual impulses at play so as to develop a different way of responding."* Leaders may need to not only provide goals; they may need to motivate their staff. Goals that align organizational goals with personal goals may provide that motivation.

The notion of a higher goal (making real improvements), more than "achieving the certification", is a starting point. Pursuing a higher goal will activate multiple high-level cortical areas within the brain, compared to goals that are strictly individually focused (Ochsner, 2011). Doing charitable deeds and giving to others increases the production of the reward neurotransmitter in the brain, dopamine, more so than receiving a charitable deed (Izuma, et al, 2008). This research indicates that simply achieving an organizational goal may not sufficiently motivate the staff to change.

When the leaders of organizations were motivated and excited about their organizational change goals, the benefits achieved were greater. For example, one mid-size private company executive said that when he would walk into a meeting, everyone was sitting separately, by contract or project. As a new organizational goal that this executive was excited about, was close to being achieved people sat together in meetings, there was a sharing of best practices and the customers gave them higher award fees.

2. Perceived Value

Perceived value has two perspectives: 1) leaders believe that the employees are valuable to goal achievement and, 2) employees believe in their own value and contribution. Leaders that believe the individuals can contribute and make a significant positive impact can help employees see the value of their own contribution. This can happen through setting appropriate goals (see above), by inclusion and attention, and by appreciation (see Phase 4 below). Not aligning a sense of value with goals can result in employee disengagement and can halt an organizational change effort (Hewitt, 2010). Observations

indicated that the amount of respect that the team leading the change has from the executive team is correlated to the success of the change effort.

Employees want their work and themselves to be noticed, cared about, and valued (Vazirani, 2007). R.F. Baumeister (1991, p.29) states that, "*Four basic needs for meaning can be suggested: purpose, value, efficacy, and self-worth. A person who is able to satisfy these four needs probably will feel that his or her life has sufficient meaning. A person who has not satisfied them is likely to feel a lack of meaning.*"

Employees may feel valued when leaders are respectful to the process lead in front of others and take an interest in the change effort details. Research also suggests that leaders who do not align their behaviours, values, and message can convey confusion and mistrust. Leon Festinger in his research on cognitive dissonance and V. Van Veen et al. (2009) suggest that leaders who are disengaged ("do as I say, not as I do") send a conflicting message to their staff. In response to this conflicting message, people may react negatively and the paradigm shift may not occur. This may be due to the fact that the brain is very sensitive to detecting errors in our environment, including conflicting messages (Rock, 2009). Experience indicates that leaders who lead by fear and demoralization can accomplish a great deal, though such leadership can result in disengaged employees and reduced cognitive functioning of the individuals (Mobbs, 2010).

Cartwright and Holmes (2006, p.203), summarizing Seligman's work in Positive Psychology, state that, "*…a meaningful life is concerned with doing something one believes in (e.g. has meaning and value). Such ideas date back to Aristotle...*" Employees,

for their own sense of self-worth need to feel valued, they need to have professional goals that align with the organizations goals, and they need to be motivated personally and feel they can add value for the greater good of the organization.

3. Paradigm Shift

When goals and value perceptions align and managers are actively and positively engaged, neuronal mirroring (Iacoboni, 2009) and feelings of increased status may occur in employees (Gallup, 2011). A mirror neuron system is a group of neurons that fire both when a person acts and when the person observes the same action performed by another (Rizzolatti, and Craighero,2004). As a result an employee's personal goals are likely to shift to align with managements and the corresponding organizational goals (Hewitt, 2010). Upon alignment, there is an approach reaction (Rock, 2008), an energy release, neural synchrony (Gross, 2004), and a harmonic resonance (Boyatzis and McKee, 2008). This neural synchrony may release dopamine in the individuals (Gross, 2004), increasing their morale. When goals, values, and the new behaviours align though the organization, a paradigm shift takes place.

When people behave consistently with their values, others recognize it (Gross, 2004). It may be that employees as a group mirror and adopt the leader's behaviours (Rizzolatti and Craighero, 2004). Expectations also shift as employees realize the old way is no longer acceptable; "the boss is really serious about this." Motivated individuals in an organization will change their personal process habits encoded in the basal ganglia (Davachi, 2010). When new behaviours become habit, and the associated thinking,

"reflexive" (i.e., automatic), less mental effort and less cognitive functioning is required in the PFC (Lieberman, 2007). This feeling is similar to the way people feel when they realize no one was holding their bicycle seat and they were pedalling all by themselves.

Similar mirroring may occur when leaders engage and motivate employees. Research into the Mirror Neuron System (Iacoboni, 2009) suggests that positive neurochemicals such as dopamine and serotonin can increase in the brains of participants. The spread of the resulting excitement throughout the organization is the "Culture Change".

As suggested by the SCARF Model, a neuroscience-based framework for engagement, status is a one of the key social domains where a threat or reward state can be activated in workplace or social settings (Rock, 2009). How leaders interact with the process team and how they communicate about it to the rest of the organization is a strong indicator of the leader's perspective of the change initiative's importance. The leaders' positive recognition and involvement in the change effort can increase the status of the process participants. The research of Naomi Eisenberger, et al., (2003) demonstrates our basic need to be socially accepted. Treating the change effort as an anomalous task is similar to being socially excluded, with the accompanying social stigma. In contrast, treating the organizational change effort as important and communicating that throughout the organization may drive support and respect for it. The result can also increase employee motivation. According to Keise Izuma et al. (2008) rewards such as social status have far more impact on motivation for human change than do physical rewards, such as money.

4. Results, Rewards, and Practice

New habits that were formed in the above steps must be sustained in order to achieve institutionalization. This is done through practice and through tangible and intangible rewards. Tangible benefits of the new behaviours (extrinsic, e.g., shortened schedules, lower costs, and intrinsic, e.g., status) provide motivation to continue following the processes. The example set by the organization's leaders has a significant impact on employees' habit formation as well as on the ultimate outcome – the certification.

In my experience with clients, success can also create a positive and palpable energy, named "Process Buzz" (Knopman, 2009) as related to organizational change efforts. Attitudes are different, people are happy and excited, ideas for improvements are flowing and being implemented, the client is surprised and excited by their successes, possibly inducing release of neurotransmitters in the brain associated with a reward state. Process Buzz increases the employees' and customers' feelings of relatedness, personal status (through personal and organizational goal achievement), and one's feelings of self worth and being valued (Rock, 2004). This rewards the individual's desire to be acknowledged, and valued (Eisenberger et al., 2003) for their role in the bigger picture (Izuma et al., 2008), and to be aligned with a "true leader" (Gross, 2004).

Emotions impact habit formation. Habits are learned, usually as a result of the sensation of pleasure related to a behavior (Graybiel, 2008). A positive emotional reward as a result of new behaviors is more likely to result in habits that endure and processes that will be sustained to achieve additional change goals. As the Process Buzz or just buzz propagates to others in the organization, it affects the organization's habits for the long-term. Ideally,

these new habits become institutionalized processes, where these new processes become reflexive behaviours.

A challenge is that achieving the initial change goal can reduce interest in sustaining it if the goal is isolated and not part of a bigger vision such as continuous improvement. Fergusen and Bargh (2004) discuss the relevance of the goal and how its importance may change if the motivation for it changes. They use the example of craving a glass of water when one is parched but once one's thirst is quenched, one will no longer crave the water. Berkman (2011) suggests if initial change is all that matters (perceived as having limited value), there will be minimal motivation to sustain it.

Also according to Berkman, (2011) the long-term impact of using fear to motivate human behavior is a decrease in cognitive performance. Habits in individuals may be developed but they will be associated with negative emotions. Organizational habits may also develop and become a sustaining system, but it will be one with little creativity and will have increased chances for product errors.

Another challenge to organizational change is the lack of sufficient motivation and practice. Because of this, individuals may change temporarily but will ultimately revert to their former behaviors and processes (Davachi, 2010). Within the field of Systems Theory, Peter M. Senge (2006) discusses this concept (homeostasis) as an individual's and an organization's basic nature, i.e., to remain the same or return to previous habits and organizational patterns. He further explains that balancing feedback processes (pressures to revert) will become active to offset new changes. Implementing and

institutionalizing new processes and therefore new habits are counter-intuitive, or may even be seen as a threat.

"*Balancing feedback processes are everywhere. They underlie all goal-oriented behavior…. …A biologist would say that all of these processes are the mechanisms by which our body achieves homeostasis - its ability to maintain conditions for survival in a changing environment… … Organizations and societies resemble complex organisms because they too have myriad balancing feedback processes*" (Senge, 2006, p.84).

Neuroscience supports this theory; it is hard for individuals to change their habits because of the strength of old neuronal maps (Lieberman, 2007). Neuronal maps of individuals appear to follow the same principals as described in Systems Theory. We tend to justify our current habits (Van Veen, et.al., 2009) rather than change them. Following new processes requires purposefully stopping and thinking, requiring more cognitive resources and energy (Arnsten, 2010). This may be the neural basis of homeostasis.

While the odds may seem against us, knowing what we are up against can help to persevere. With this perseverance, practice and diligence, keeping sight of our goals, an alignment with our values, reinforcing our own behaviors and encouraging ourselves, and with practice we will achieve our organizational goals, and have happier groups of people in the organization.

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