

# The Change Masters: Organizational Development in a State Archives

LORETTA L. HEFNER

**Abstract:** For archival institutions to maximize productivity and efficiency and create well-balanced work environments for the individuals within those institutions, archivists must begin to focus more seriously and intently on the organizational processes and management style of their institutions. This article suggests that the management technique of organizational development be considered as an optimal alternative to more traditional management styles, particularly autocratic management styles. The author discusses organizational development in the context of an archival institution which, for a period of time, implemented the organizational development theory. The article concludes that unless the managers and individuals of an institution are truly committed to a progressive and humanly responsive management approach that values the processes of the organization and the development of the employee, archival institutions may remain mired in their own management deficiencies, thereby affecting the ultimate goal of an organization—to create an environment that is responsive both to the goals of the profession and the needs of the individual.

*About the author:* Loretta L. Hefner is archivist and records manager at the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory in Berkeley, California. She previously was bureau manager of Records Analysis and Micrographics at the Utah State Archives. She obtained her bachelor and master's degrees at the University of Utah in history and political science and has since studied business and public administration and management. Hefner is a Certified Records Manager. She wishes to thank Christine Burdick for her editorial assistance.

ARCHIVISTS ARE DEDICATED TO the care and perpetuation of society's documents and information, in an effort to preserve and make accessible society's collective memory. Despite that dedication, archivists often overlook the organizational environment and processes in the institutions in which they work, institutions which ultimately permit them to carry out the profession's goals. For archivists to reach their professional goals, they must learn to successfully survive in and make the most of organizations; they must, as managers, create well-balanced, healthy organizations. They must learn to minimize the organizational obstacles and build environments where they and their colleagues can learn, grow, accomplish, and serve the larger institutions of which they are a part. Consequently, the practice and style of managing archives must have more qualitative and quantitative attention, to improve not only management per se, but also the productivity and efficiency of the organization and the well-being of individuals.<sup>1</sup>

Many organizations practice innovative management techniques in which individuals are actively engaged in worthwhile pursuits, seek challenges, use time and energy efficiently, show concern for others, are open and honest, set high professional standards, welcome feedback, see things through to completion, tolerate and use opposing views, use conflict constructively, have freedom, and are happy to come to work in the morning. At the other end of the spectrum are organizations with employees who are passive, avoid challenges, thrive on complaining, blame others for their failures, misuse time and energy, do not care for others' feelings, manipulate others, set low production standards, avoid

feedback, are intolerant of others' views, and are generally unhappy about their long-term destiny.<sup>2</sup>

Archives, like other institutions, consist of a mix of these characteristics. To hear archival colleagues discuss their repositories' organizational processes is to sense that too many institutions are laboring in organizational trouble rather than focusing on cooperative, innovative, shared values. In the archival literature, great emphasis is placed on improving the archival systems of inventorying, appraising, accessioning, description, and reference, with little or no attention given to the management difficulties often encountered. None of this literature discusses managing change or building organizational work environments that motivate people to design archival systems creatively.<sup>3</sup>

This article attempts to begin such discussions, focusing on the management technique of organizational development as a model for managing in-depth system change. Where appropriate, significant examples are highlighted using a state archives setting as a case study. That institution throughout the article will be identified as the "State Archives." To provide a contrast to organizational development as an alternative management model, autocratic management and its resulting leadership styles will be briefly discussed.

Numerous management models exist employing different leadership and decision-making styles that an archives director might select to approach organizational improvement. One of the more traditional and, perhaps, most familiar management styles is autocratic; within that management approach are several management styles, including the autocratic manager, the

<sup>1</sup>The title of this article alludes to the book by Rosabeth Moss Kantor, *The Change Masters: Innovations for Productivity in the Corporations* (New York: Simon-Schuster, 1983).

<sup>2</sup>Mike Woodcock and Dave Francis, *Unblocking Your Organization: People At Work, A Practical Guide to Organizational Change* (LaJolla, Calif.: University Associates, 1979), 69.

<sup>3</sup>Paul McCarthy found in his survey of literature for an eleven year period, 1975-1986, a dearth of archival management articles. McCarthy's article seeks to address the problem. See "The Management of Archives: A Research Agenda," *American Archivist* 51 (Winter and Spring 1988): 52-64.

consultative autocrat, the consensus manager, and the shareholder manager.<sup>4</sup>

In pure autocratic management, control is centralized; decisions can be made quickly, and uniformity is ensured; employees have little or no influence in decision making; management has many levels, and clear job demarcations exist. Some who dislike responsibility enjoy autocratic direction; others become angry or depressed with their powerlessness. Subordinates do not receive a chance to stretch, perform, or grow, and can become servile. Managing large systemic change may be faster initially; however, time and energy ultimately will be spent correcting errors because employees do not receive training in theory and principles or hear the rationale for decisions or work production. Furthermore, in autocratic reorganization, much time is consumed after changes have been announced, since people must then be convinced and enticed to support what has been decided and implemented.<sup>5</sup> The more significant the change, the greater the likelihood that it will be resisted. Time, labor, productivity, trust, communication, and professional respect are usually sacrificed at this stage.

Applying such an autocratic management style in archival institutions requires the director to establish the organizational structure and detail new processes of records scheduling, appraising, accessioning, describing records disposal, and reference. He may overtly or more subtly encourage current untrained staff to leave, and may hire individuals with whom he is more comfortable. The director may also develop written policies-and-procedures manuals so all staff members know what is expected of them. He also delineates staff roles. All these tasks and changes are made without involving the staff, except in im-

plementation.

Also encompassed by the traditional autocratic approach is the consultative autocrat. The consultative autocrat gathers some information from subordinates, but remains solely responsible for the decision making. Subordinates are again left primarily to adjust to and implement decisions in which they have had no voice.

Further along the autocratic spectrum are the consensus and shareholder managers who ask for information about pending decisions and seek assistance from subordinates in making those decisions. The consensus manager, however, makes the final decision in isolation, while the shareholder manager permits the group ultimately to make the decision. Clearly, traditional management styles run along a continuum based on the quantity of information a manager requests from his subordinates and the degree to which he ultimately involves his subordinates in the decision making.

Along with more traditional management orientations is yet one other approach: an organizational development model that attempts to create a climate where people are taught to be full participants in the organization's management. In this model, organization members learn to analyze their own processes, benefit from them, and make full-scale changes. Organizational development maximizes employee participation to teach people to identify and solve their own organizational problems, learn to adapt to changing organizational circumstances, and take advantage of an array of organizational opportunities. Organizational development is an elastic term that can refer broadly to any organizational improvement scheme or can more narrowly be defined by certain activities, standards, and techniques. For the purposes of this article, the latter definition is used.

<sup>4</sup>Harold Koontz, Cyril O'Donnell, and Heinz Weihrich, *Management* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980), 6-82.

<sup>5</sup>William G. Ouchi, *Theory Z: How American Business Can Meet the Japanese Challenge* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1981), 39.

Leaders in the organizational development field identify several critical points in defining its methodology. Organizational development's foundation is basic and applied behavioral science and action research; it is a discipline with its own set of assumptions. Rooted in an optimistic view of human nature, it requires that people communicate openly in an authentic, honest manner. It stresses that conflict is inherent in interaction among people and groups, but that, through conflict, people clarify their expectations, bring understanding where there was ambiguity, and strengthen their ability to work together toward a common goal. It assumes people in a group can and should have their personal needs met within that group, and that they in turn will identify with and participate in the group to such an extent that they will modify their own personal behaviors to the benefit and growth of the group. Organizational development proponents believe that full participation assures better decision making, that group members must trust each other, and that flexibility in organizations and procedures is preferred over structure and rigidity.<sup>6</sup>

Organizational development openly challenges concepts of power and authority. Whereas some managers prefer strong control at the top of the hierarchy, organizational development theory and practice call for members of the organization to have authority and power based on their exper-

tise and professional competence rather than on their position. Inherent in this thinking is shared leadership; extraordinary value is placed on development of an individual's abilities to allow that individual to become a stronger member of the group.<sup>7</sup>

Most importantly, organizational development is not a fix; it is not an answer in and of itself. It is a process that recognizes that organizations are perpetually engaged in paradigm conflict. Organizational development is the process that requires group members to take responsibility for their own actions and beliefs, and work cooperatively with others even though they may hold disparate beliefs. People must recognize and value other ways of looking at issues. In that way, "paradigm cooperation" is created.<sup>8</sup>

Organizational development must be supported by upper management, be planned, and be systemic. The systemic aspect distinguishes it from single, isolated efforts to make people in an organization feel good about themselves. Furthermore, organizational development is a long-term series of interventions to teach people to be alert to strategic opportunities and problem-solving and regenerative processes.<sup>9</sup> The organizational development process teaches managers and employees that they all share in the responsibilities of building a healthy organizational culture.

To properly employ an organizational development model requires, by definition,

<sup>6</sup>Richard Beckhard, "What is Organization Development?" in *Organization Development: Theory, Practice, Research*, rev. ed., ed. Wendell L. French, Cecil H. Bell, Jr., and Robert A. Zawacki (Plano, Tex.: Business Publications, 1983), 20-22; Wendell L. French and Cecil H. Bell, Jr., "A Definition of Organization Development," in *Organization Development: Theory, Practice, Research*, 27-30.

<sup>7</sup>French and Bell, "A Brief History of Organization Development," 15-19; Kurt Lewin, "Changing as Three Steps: Unfreezing, Moving, and Freezing of Group Standards," in *Organization Development: Theory, Practice, Research*, 66; Jack K. Fordyce and Raymond Weil, "Methods for Finding Out What's Going On," in *Organization Development: Theory, Practice, Research*, 124-32; Harry Levinson, *Organizational Diagnosis* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972).

<sup>8</sup>Anne Wilson Schaefer and Diane Fassel, *The Addictive Organization: Why We Overwork, Cover Up, Pick Up the Pieces, Please the Boss and Perpetuate Sick Organizations* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988), 39.

<sup>9</sup>Robert Tannenbaum and Sheldon Davis, "Values, Man, and Organizations," in *Organization Development: Theory, Practice, Research* 47-59; Richard Beckhard, "Optimizing Team-Building Efforts," in *Organization Development: Theory, Practice, Research*, 152-58; Wendell L. French, Cecil H. Bell, Jr., and Robert A. Zawacki, "Theory and Practice on Change and Changing," in *Organization Development: Theory, Practice, Research*, 61.



a trained consultant who uses its theories and technologies. In bringing in such a consultant, management must recognize that when any outsider is brought in—and particularly an organizational development consultant who is directed to tinker with the organization's mechanisms—people immediately ask why they are being singled out for this treatment and what they did wrong to deserve it. The initial fear is that it is a management ploy to manipulate them into doing something they do not want to do. Upper management who hires such a consultant always has the burden of positively identifying to group members why upper management believes there is a problem, how they want the problem addressed, and the end results they expect. The organizational development consultant must gently deal with the fears, denial, and resistance that will occur, and move the group into a mindset in which individuals can participate in the organizational development process.

Typically, the consultant will engage in an organizational development process which consists of six steps: (1) entry, or problem awareness, (2) data gathering, (3) diagnosis and assessment, (4) intervention, (5) evaluation, and (6) termination.<sup>10</sup>

### Entry, or Problem Awareness

The most common tool in becoming aware of an organization's status is "disease" or "felt pain." This "felt pain" may come out of any number of sources but, put very simply, it signals that something within the organization is seriously amiss. For example, individuals within the organization may not be content, or there may be an unusual number of customer complaints. The particular source of the organization's felt pain differs from organization

to organization. One organization may be experiencing an increase in civil-rights violation complaints, theft and/or fraud by employees, and/or high employee turnover; another organization may be experiencing high absenteeism, burnout of key professionals, or upper management dissatisfaction with the unit.

In the State Archives case study, upper management had an opportunity to implement the organizational development model due to retirement of the long-time state archivist. The decision to implement such a model was based on many facts that suggested that the organization was ailing. At this point, the State Archives was approaching step one of the organization development process: entry, or problem awareness.

The State Archives upper management came to their initial problem awareness through a series of circumstances. First was a very critical legislative performance audit that reported that the state's records and archives programs were ineffectively operated, and that records were not easily accessed or retrievable from the storage facilities. The report stated that historically valuable records had been stolen, and that preservation techniques and microfilm operations were below national standards.<sup>11</sup> Upper management also noted that of a staff of thirty-six, only one person was a member of any professional archives or records management association. Government administrators who were engaged in state-wide productivity and information resource management programs found the State Archives uncooperative and unwilling to lead in areas which were statutorily required of the archives division.

Next, upper management was required to intervene in internal division matters re-

<sup>10</sup>William Bennis, Kenneth Benne, and R. Chin, *The Planning of Change* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961); Ronald Lippitt, Jeanne Watson, and Bruce Westley, *The Dynamics of Planned Change* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1958); William Bennis, *Changing Organizations*, ed. Willard B. Spalding (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966).

<sup>11</sup>Office of the Legislative Auditor General, Report of a Performance Audit of the Division of Archives, April 1979, 1-45.

lating to sex, religious, and race discrimination; employee harassment; and unfair employment practices. That intervention revealed a rigid leadership style and decisions made solely by one person—pure autocratic management.

Also discovered was an excessive stratification and overlapping of management. One out of every four employees was a supervisor. Work units isolated themselves and did not communicate with other units involved in different facets of the same work.

Finally, upper management discovered bitter intergroup and intragroup conflict; some staff members decided that maintenance of a low profile was the best strategy. Other staff members decided that the only way to bring about change was through using the organization's grievance and civil-rights protection processes.

Because the organization had several strong successes working in its favor despite these serious ills, upper management was committed to remedying the problems in a positive, humanistic way. Those strengths included an annual budget allocation of over \$1.2 million. The enacting legislation gave the division strong comprehensive control over all aspects of archives, records management, micrographics, and state information practices. The staff was also fiercely dedicated to serving state and local government and was willing to do what management instructed them to do.

### Data Gathering

After a decision is made to introduce the organizational development model and problem awareness has at least begun, as in the State Archives approach just discussed, data gathering must begin. Data gathering may be one of the most important steps of the six, as all subsequent steps are affected by the quality and thoroughness of assessing the organization's current situa-

tion. Only from clearly understanding present reality with its positive/negative elements can the regenerative work and change-making come. This stage includes such processes as conducting surveys and one-on-one interviews, spending time in the organization talking with people about their concerns and observations, polling opinions, asking staff members to complete anonymous questionnaires about their perceptions and feelings about how the organization operates, and asking intact work groups to construct collages of their vision of the organization as they perceive it should be in the next one to three years. The organizational development consultant supervises these activities to understand the behavior of the organization.

In the State Archives case study, data gathering became a constant process that included staff meetings where employees were encouraged to discuss the organization and their work. Each time State Archives's employees opened up and gradually shared more of their own views without experiencing negative consequences, they became more comfortable and trusting and, consequently, more expressive the next time. Early on, the consultants were the principal parties gathering data. In time, the two consultants taught the employees to ask questions, clarify assumptions, and validate information before acting on it. In this way, the employees learned to do the data gathering for themselves and to implement the organizational development methods after the consultants' departure.

### Diagnosis

Once enough information is available, the next step is to analyze and distinguish the nature of what is occurring within the organization and the causes of many problems.<sup>12</sup> The consultant amasses and organizes the data collected—the imagery

<sup>12</sup>Marwin R. Weisbord, "Organizational Diagnosis: Six Places to Look for Trouble with or without a Theory," in *Organization Development: Theory, Practice, Research*, 140–45.

employees used to describe observations, the nonverbal signs of who supports whom and who tries to invalidate and discount certain ideas. Then the consultant draws hypotheses about the underlying processes at work in the system. The symptoms must be carefully distinguished from the causes. After the hypotheses are narrowed, they must be tested and corrected through specifically designed corrective measures called interventions, some of which are discussed below.

To begin the diagnostic process, nine supervisors of the State Archives met two hours a week under the consultants' guidance. They constructed a diagram depicting the strengths and weaknesses of the archives program. They listed elements which pushed them towards their goals and, conversely, listed weaknesses that made it hard for people to work together and concentrate on accomplishing the division's goals. Such an analytical tool, called force field analysis, can be an excellent technique to highlight key factors when emotions are high.<sup>13</sup>

Next, the supervisors were randomly divided into two groups; each group took its members' average rankings of the positive and negative items. Once the rankings were completed, an information sharing process began. With the consultant always focusing and giving feedback on how the members dealt with and addressed each other, the members slowly learned to watch themselves and each other for nonverbal signals. The information sharing can be shocking, as differences in opinions can vary widely. For example, one supervisor during the force field analysis at the State Archives thought the organization represented a highly trained group of professionals, while another supervisor ranked his list in a way that indicated he felt that no one was professionally competent.

The force field analysis and other diagnostic tools help generate data designed to identify organizational problems. At the State Archives, the positive and negative items listed were discussed week after week for one or two hours each time. This revealed that the negatives were corollaries of one major theme: the State Archives did not think of itself as one team; employees protected their particular points of view or sections, and failed to understand that the sum of all the sections affected the quality and quantity of production. In short, while everyone probably meant well, infighting seriously hurt users, the public, employees, and the work environment. Identifying that issue completed the diagnostic step. The archives then moved into the intervention phase of organizational development.

### Intervention

Identifying the organization's problems makes possible the selection of appropriate methods to solve the problems; these problem-solving methods are termed "interventions" and are designed to address and correct the problems identified in the diagnostic stages. The intervention process has three primary goals: to allow the participants to generate adequate information; to use that information to make informed choices, by consensus; and to commit themselves to those choices.<sup>14</sup> Intervention, the stage where the in-depth change and corrective measures are taken, is the real work of the organizational development process. Successful interventions make changes in workgroup behavior a reality and not merely an analytical exercise in organizational process.

The particular intervention or interventions used in any organization must be tailored for the issues identified in the diagnostic stage. For example, the State

<sup>13</sup>Kurt Lewin, *Field Theory in Social Science: Selected Theoretical Papers* (New York: Harper and Row, 1951); David H. Jenkins, "Social Engineering in Educational Change: An Outline of Method," *Progressive Education* 27 (May 1949): 193-97.

<sup>14</sup>Chris Argyris, *Intervention Theory and Method* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1970), 15-33.

Archives identified three primary issues: poor delivery of professional services from the State Archives to the rest of government, lack of unity or “team” thinking among employees, and lack of structural forces to contribute to employee motivation and hygiene. Consequently, the State Archives used three of the most common interventions: strategic planning, intergroup and third party interventions, and structural interventions.

**Strategic Planning.** One method of addressing an organization’s problems and keeping the organization on track once the problem is corrected is strategic planning.<sup>15</sup> Every organization must have a strong planning component. In an archives, for example, there must be an established vision concerning the direction of the repository and the expectation for the future; that vision must be communicated to all who work in the organization. Employees can participate in moving toward a destination if they know where they are going.

Planning, in the archival community as well as other places, has received some incisive criticisms. Some planning efforts have been “ivory tower,” academic exercises with no relationship to the operational needs or capabilities of an institution. Sometimes, for all the time and rumination, there is no bottom-line impact. There are times when engaging in a planning process frustrates participants even more because change is slow and occurs incrementally.

Nevertheless, many reasons exist to take planning very seriously and thoughtfully. It is not a perfect process but for archivists, the consequences of failing to plan are grave. Budgets, staff power, and increased workload demand that resources be used judiciously. Without planning and a shared vision, an archives is left to fight small

crises, be thrown by short-term circumstances, and lose significant opportunities.

Planning does not put an archival institution, or any institution, in absolute control; however, it compels administrators to think about the possibilities, opportunities, and obstacles that might occur. A well-thought-out planning effort challenges archivists and managers to analyze their core business and identify their real clients/customers. Strengths and weaknesses of the current program can be identified to build and improve upon the past. General timetables and employee and financial resources can be better allocated to change dreams and wishes into a concrete set of priorities against which progress can be measured.

Another aspect of planning must be considered, and the State Archives is an excellent example of this specific organizational phenomenon—that of becoming mired in stagnant and regressive processes. Organizations, like natural organisms, must adapt to their changing environments or risk extinction; they have to fight against inertia and inflexibility. The State Archives had refused to see the transformation within state government and the changes in information technologies. Management had failed to keep current with archives and records management associations. Management had fought the content of the critical legislative performance audit rather than openly considering it or asking for the assistance of an expert consultant in response to it.

In the strategic planning process, positive and negative feedback, and disputed or shared perceptions must be considered. Archival organizations must plan to address all concerns if strategic planning is to be relevant to the parent organization. If an

<sup>15</sup>Standard texts on organizational planning include Billy E. Goetz, *Management Planning and Control* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1949), and R. M. Fulmer and L. W. Rue, *The Practice and Profitability of Long-Range Planning* (Oxford, Ohio: Planning Executives Institute, 1973). Monographs that incorporate the humanistic/organizational transformation perspectives include Philip R. Harris, *New World, New Ways, New Management* (New York: American Management Association, 1983), and Tom Peters, *Thriving on Chaos: Handbook for a Management Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988).

archives refuses to make moderate and continuing readjustments as information presents itself, the pressure for radical change will build, until minor changes are inadequate to meet the challenges. At that point, radical, systemwide change may be required. Small changes made early are less painful, meet with less resistance, and produce less fear and uncertainty.

The State Archives system change was dramatic, as the archives was faced with professionalizing its operations, methods, and services to be more in line with established guidelines while building the staff's expertise and minimizing their anxiety. The organizational development intervention of strategic planning gave direction in meeting those concerns.<sup>16</sup> To implement strategic planning, the State Archives began with a three-day session of seven people in an off-site conference room where undivided attention could be devoted to the work. The ground rules required free thinking with evaluation; each participant could speak, and the statements would be considered only as data—response was unnecessary. The group then categorized activities designed to improve the State Archives.

Next, the seven-member committee developed a divisionwide mission statement which consisted of several lines of core objectives. Developing such a statement necessarily brought to attention varying perceptions, requiring the statement to be redefined later, in the context of other considerations such as clientele and funding sources.

After the initial mission statement was drafted, the committee discussed the composition of the State Archives's clientele, as well as the make-up of the larger institutional setting, such as state government and the archival profession as a whole.

Once general purposes and mission statements and goals are identified, action steps to implement the mission statement

should be developed. At this point, it may become necessary to gather broader organizational information. This can, as it did at the State Archives, involve many of the organization's employees.

In the State Archives case study, the state archivist briefed employees in a general staff meeting on the committee's decisions, and asked that staff members be on at least one study team to research the questions requiring more data. During the next two weeks, the State Archives became abuzz with energy. Employees wanted to have a say in the restructuring and rebuilding; the study teams shifted emphasis away from fear and lack of control to a positive thrust of being valued and trusted. People worked across small unit lines and became familiar with their colleagues as they worked to find answers. For the first time, employees were introduced to professional organizations and professional literature on records and archives management. The staff independently began calling for some of the same changes that the state archivist had suggested to meet national archives practice.

Two weeks later, team members orally reported their findings at a division meeting. The group applauded after each team concluded their report, and peer support ran high. The following week, the steering committee evaluated the data and changed some earlier assumptions. The state archivist synthesized the committee's work, the study teams' research, and wrote the first draft of the strategic plan. Again, the employees were encouraged to review and comment on it, after which further changes were made. At that point, the state archivist sent it to archivists in other states and to professional organizations for comments and feedback. Internally, the plan was referenced often and was the road map for change. Two years after the formal strategic plan was released, the plan was reassessed, updated, and the staff discussed the

<sup>16</sup>Thomas H. Roger, "Strategic Planning: A Major OD Intervention," in *Organization Development: Theory, Practice, Research*, 168–70.



continued growth and direction of the State Archives.

As demonstrated by the State Archives example, strategic planning should be an all-encompassing and continuing process which remains flexible as the organization's needs and problems change. As an organization's strategic plan is refined and reassessed from year to year, it necessarily requires the organization to engage in data gathering and diagnosis and, thus, keeps alive the organizational development process.

**Intergroup and Third-Party Interventions: Two-Person Disputes.** Another intervention methods is designed to meet intergroup conflict.<sup>17</sup> Nothing impedes an organization like serious prolonged conflict between key individuals, and conflict is certain to occur in an institution that is changing and growing. Employee conflicts are unpleasant, disruptive, costly, create anxiety for those in contact with the individuals embroiled in the conflict, and generally result in damaged relationships. Left unresolved, conflict injures camaraderie, creativity, trust, commitment, and team cohesiveness.

Every organization has its share of conflict. The absence of conflict does not mean peace, and conflict itself does not mean that the organization is unhealthy. Poorly handled conflict, however, is strongly symptomatic of a dysfunctional system. Conflicts must be dealt with directly, approached honestly, and explored thoroughly. Appropriate conflict confrontation and resolution leads to joint problem solving. If conflict is left unchecked, partially addressed, or suppressed, however, the discord will grow; feelings will be displaced and hostility deflected into other issues.

Archivists, as do all managers, want to be successful and project the image of a smoothly run organization with content members. A placid appearance seems paramount, even if the waters below are choppy and rough. The general work force is ill trained to deal with conflict, and archivists as managers are no exception. Most have been socialized to think that conflict must be avoided; if it cannot be avoided, it must be resolved by one winning and another losing. In such a situation, someone feels they were in the right and the other party was in the wrong, and vice versa.

Fortunately, that does not have to be the end result. Conflict resolution can result in greater understanding between individuals, improved morale, renewed commitment to work, and clarified expectations. In the State Archives, the consultant worked with individuals to resolve work disputes arising out of the organizational development process. Some of the veteran managers were particularly distressed at a colleague who was outspokenly in favor of the organizational changes. The veteran managers complained bitterly to upper management. An upper management administrator, operating without specific conflict resolution training, became very frustrated upon hearing these reports, and criticized the offending employee for the reported misbehavior. No questions were asked; the accusations were not verified; and the offending employee was never given any specifics of the reported misbehavior so that he could modify his behavior if necessary. The administrator's approach absolved the complaining individuals from their part in the conflict. They did not have to accept responsibility for stating their needs or expectations of the offending person nor accept responsi-

<sup>17</sup>Richard Beckhard, "The Confrontation Meeting," in *Organization Development: Theory, Practice, Research*, 133-39; Carl Rogers, "Two-person Disputes," in *Organization Development: Theory, Practice, Research*, 192; Richard E. Walton, "Interpersonal Confrontation and Basic Third-party Functions: A Case Study," in *Organization Development: Theory, Practice, Research*, 193-201; Jeanne M. Brett, Stephen B. Goldberg, and William Ury, "Mediation and Organizational Development: Models for Conflict Management," in *Organization Development: Theory, Practice, Research*, 206-10.



bility for making the complaints, nor were they required to discuss the problem with the individual about whom they complained.

The organizational development model offers a sharp contrast to this scenario. In the beginning, the consultant must be present in conflict resolution and problem solving to teach the inharmonious employees the new methods. In time, however, employees learn to incorporate the facilitator's skills into their own communication abilities. The employees and the consultant sit down together at a convenient time and in a suitable place where they will be comfortable and uninterrupted. The consultant is nonevaluative about the content of the dispute, and impartial as to the outcome. He is there to assure that the experience is positive for both people, and advances ground rules to make certain the session is fair and nonabusive. He listens to both parties describe their perceptions and asks them to focus on what they understand the issues to be. The critical events in the conflict are reviewed from both perspectives, and all the accompanying feelings and personal needs are aired. Nothing is dismissed as being petty, ridiculous, or too sensitive. Attention is focused on what each party wants from the other, what they expect from each other, what the contract will be upon leaving the room, and what the communication will be in the future to ensure that the conflict is not resurrected.

This method requires assertiveness, honesty, and strength, as well as a mature perspective. The good of the organization has to take precedence over being personally right. One has to be able to validate other

perceptions, admit mistakes, and accomplish work tasks interdependently. As these are not skills people seem naturally given to, they must be learned and practiced. Lastly, individuals must be willing to relinquish position and hierarchy to solve their problems. They must be responsible for themselves, their feelings, and behaviors. All parties must come to an understanding that the task itself is 50 percent of the work that is to be done, but the other 50 percent is the process of people qualitatively cooperating and communicating to improve an organization.<sup>18</sup>

**Structural Interventions: Quality of Work Life.** The third intervention method deals with the structuring of the work environment to correct organizational problems generally related to employee morale, loyalty, and satisfaction. "Quality of work life" has become a popular phrase covering a myriad of workplace expectations.<sup>19</sup> Throughout the twentieth century, many reform movements were organized to improve the workplace. Over the decades, such reform measures have included physical safety, regulated forty-hour work weeks, the establishment of minimum wages, unionization, due process, equal employment, and job enrichment. From the 1970s, the underlying values of these reforms were enunciated, elaborated, and then wedded with environmental and humanistic values. Management has assumed that enhancing the quality of work life would improve productivity; the general public assumes that their place of employment will satisfy their self-actualization needs and aspirations.

The term "quality of work life" today is measured by the many attempts to hu-

<sup>18</sup>Stanley Herman and Michael Koronich, *Authentic Management: A Gestalt Orientation to Organizations and Their Development* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1977); Robert Bolton, *People Skills: How to Assert Yourself, Listen to Others, and Resolve Conflicts* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1979).

<sup>19</sup>Richard E. Walton, "Quality of Work Life: What Is It?" in *Organization Development: Theory, Practice, Research*, 276-82; T. G. Cummings, Edmond S. Molloy, and Roy H. Glen, "Intervention Strategies for Improving Productivity and the Quality of Work Life," *Organizational Dynamics* 4 (Summer 1975): 52-68; Louis E. Davis and Albert B. Cherns, *The Quality of Working Life* (New York: Free Press, 1975); J. Richard Hackman and J. Lloyd Suttle, *Improving Life at Work* (Santa Monica, Calif.: Goodyear Publishing, 1977).

manize places of employment. Generally accepted criteria for work environments with an acceptable quality of work life include adequate and fair compensation, safe and healthy working conditions, immediate opportunity to utilize and develop human capacities, future opportunity for continued growth and security, social integration, and constitutionalism in the work organization as well as the social relevance of work life.

At the State Archives, the circumstances were prime to make many such improvements. The state archivist, due to the receptiveness of the staff, initiated many structural interventions designed to improve the quality of work life. For example, all current positions were abolished, new job descriptions were written, and salary surveys conducted. The structure was carefully designed to offer each employee a better career ladder by which he or she could advance in the organization. The new job descriptions were posted, and all staff members applied for the new positions. They were encouraged to apply and interview for their first three choices. Conscious effort was made to build a system that provided fair compensation and comparable worth. Fair compensation requires that pay received for certain work bear an appropriate relationship to the pay received for other work. Comparable worth requires employers to compensate employees equally for jobs that have comparable skills, efforts, and responsibilities and for jobs that are of comparable value.<sup>20</sup>

Large organizations, such as state governments, are noted for consuming human talents rather than developing them. The State Archives, in adopting more humanistic values, decreed that every employee be given the opportunity to develop skills and abilities. Personal and professional

growth were viewed as part of an employee's job; future work assignments were made to develop newly acquired skills, and advancement opportunities always were to be open to current staff. This forced internal recruitment at the State Archives; indeed, new positions were externally recruited only after there were no suitable internal candidates. All current staff also became eligible for an annual \$1,000 tuition assistance package to pursue academic degrees. Several adults returned to local universities and completed their undergraduate and graduate degrees.

Lastly, when a current staff member's skills were incompatible with the newly established direction, that person was assisted in being placed in another state government office where those skills could be used. In this way, there was some measure of income security associated with an employee's job.

All such efforts serve to improve employees' work life, which in turn reaps benefits in increased motivation, loyalty, and commitment to organization goals. Individual job satisfaction improves as well, which results in lower employee turnover.

### Evaluation of the Organizational Development Process

This final step of evaluation is crucial to the ability of the organization to adapt to the changes brought about by intervention, as well as to remain flexible enough to adjust intervention methods if new problems develop or old ones recur. Organizational development is sometimes called planned change; change occurs in an organization and in its people almost every day. Evaluation is a daily part of the organizational development process. A consultant's job is not completed until the organization knows

<sup>20</sup>James T. Brink, "The Comparable Worth Issue: A Salary Administration Bombshell," *Personnel Administration* 26 (November 1981): 37-40; Robert D. Hershey, Jr., "Women's Pay Fight Shifts to Comparable Worth," *New York Times*, 1 November 1983, sec. A, p. 15; Melanee A. Cherry, "Comparable Worth: An Examination of the Concept, Related Issues and Institutional Ethical Dilemmas" (Unpublished paper, University of Utah, 1984).

how to identify what is taking place both internally and externally, how to evaluate this information, and how to respond in ways which advance the organization's mission.<sup>21</sup>

Formal evaluation of the success of the time and dollars devoted to organizational development is an art and not a science. It requires reasoning and intuition as well as empirical analysis. No one survey or questionnaire shows exactly when the consultant's role is completed. The manager who initially identified the problems preventing the organization from realizing its full potential is pivotal in deciding what more, if anything, should be done. He or she works closely with the organizational development consultant in the evaluation and eventual termination of the consultant's contract.

### Conclusion

Organizational development is not for the faint-hearted. It takes time, insight into human behavior, patience, and a determination to allow people to grow and assimilate change. It requires a leader who knows academically and emotionally that paternalistic systems arrest adult development. It requires leadership which is clear minded about the organizational direction and understands the balance between offering support without controlling. Organizational development democratizes the process, but not the system. It is not a methodology that works well when the people in the organization want someone else to make the decisions for them or when someone wants the results one certain way.

Should other archives attempt organizational development? What are the factors that will help it succeed? What will cause an organizational development effort to fail? First and foremost, for organizational development to be successfully implemented, top management must be supportive and

understanding. Time and money must be reserved for the consultant and for the staff to learn the processes and skills. And the consultant must be qualified and experienced. The program itself will be no better than the quality of the consultant. Rapport and trust between the top manager and the consultant is also critical.

Organizational development is an approach used to confront sometimes painful realities. There comes a point in the process when it appears that a lid has been lifted off a hot, bubbling caldron. Complaints and discord will be loud, but upper management must not step in with power or self-serving solutions and instruct everyone to "get back to work." Organizational development *is* work. The manager must trust the process, and must avoid any destructive change strategies which undermine the trust and are inconsistent with the values set out. Strong change agents must be a part of the system to promote the organizational development process and add momentum to the new style of interaction.

Management must also take extra care to recruit and bring new employees into a changing system. Not all individuals are flexible enough for the group processes required; some have a strong need for finely drawn perimeters. If the organization has made a strategic decision to operate in a different manner, dissension may arise between the employee unable to adapt and the organization.

Lastly, organizational development must take place in a stable environment. Studies have shown that only one-third of those organizations which have used organizational development are continuing the process "at a reasonable level" four to five years later. Two-thirds of the organizations aborted the effort or the efforts were declining. Organizational development experts have isolated variables that enhance the chances of en-

<sup>21</sup>F. C. Mann, "Study and Creating Change: A Means to Understanding Social Organization," in *Research in Industrial Human Relations*, ed. C. Arensberger, et al. (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), 157-67.

during organizational changes. These include widespread knowledge of the changed behaviors within the organization, the number of staff members who perform the new behaviors and how often they perform them, and whether employees like performing the new behaviors.<sup>22</sup>

If a system has been dysfunctional for twenty years, three years of new leadership with organizational development values will not be sufficient to institutionalize new methods unless upper management has been actively involved in the new processes and is committed to the ongoing nature of organizational development. With that committed upper management support, the organization can be sure that successive directors and managers will continue the organizational development process. Otherwise, the organization is likely to deteriorate and revert to more traditional, and sometimes destructive, management styles when management changes are made.

The State Archives in this case study did not continue with its commitment to organization development past the third year. There was a change in upper management and the state archivist left. There was no one among the administrators who knew or understood the methodology. The experienced consultants were no longer within the state government system. The State Archives's professionalized methods remained in tact and continued to improve but through a more traditional autocratic management style.

No measurement tools existed at the State Archives to evaluate whether the organizational development methodologies improved individuals' inventorying and scheduling of records or arranging and describing the backlog. An evaluation of this aspect of the experience is more subjective than objective. It was expected that the State Archives would make a dramatic transition

from an institution mired in inaction and conflict to one that could offer the state the full array of records and archives management services. To a great extent, that expectation continues to be met as a direct result of the organizational development intervention.

Despite the lack of direct empirical data to suggest that archival institutions are well adapted to organizational development as a primary management approach, certain characteristics of archivists and archival institutions suggest that they are a very good place to establish a consultative organizational development approach. Archivists are generally well educated and have been introduced to social and behavioral science models and systems approaches. Archivists frequently need to work with a high degree of autonomy in applying general professional guidelines.

From the vantage point of the institution, resources are scarce and a highly motivated work group which can communicate and work together effectively to accomplish its tasks is highly desirable. With higher workgroup morale, professionals might be more willing to stay at a repository longer, thereby reducing staff turnover. There might also be less professional burnout and fewer support and professional staff leaving for other careers.

One potential problem, however, might be the general lack of knowledge and training archivists have in current management theory and practice. Organizational development is one of the more advanced human resource technologies. Archivists considering hiring a consultant would be well advised to obtain a good general foundation in management sciences.

Overall, organizational development represents a progressive and humanly responsive management approach which values the processes of the organization and

<sup>22</sup>Paul S. Goodman and James W. Dean, Jr., "Why Productivity Efforts Fail," in *Organization Development: Theory, Practice, Research*, 285-91; Stanley E. Seashore and David G. Bowers, "Durability of Organization Change," in *Organization Development: Theory, Practice, Research*, 538-45.

the development of the employee. The ultimate goal is to create an organizational environment that is efficient, productive, and responsive to the goals and needs of the organization as well as the individual. The effort requires that institutions and individuals move from a narcissistic, win/lose mentality to a more humanistic, win/win philosophy. In a society in which organi-

zations often reflect the fabric of personal relationships generally and individually and in which one's organizational experiences, in turn, influence and impact one's personal life, it is critical that more humane, kind, and considered attention be given to the processes of organizations and managing individuals, no matter what one's professional inclinations.

---