

Abstract

Most theories of motivation and change emphasize one or two variables but not others that might have relevance, which can prevent a complete and accurate OD assessment. To avoid this limitation, Motivational System Mapping (MSM) uses a systems approach to gather information about the five variables which have been most often discussed in the motivational literature—needs, thinking, feelings, deciding, and doing—and explores their dynamic interrelationships. This article outlines the theoretical basis for MSM, and describes how it can be used as an assessment methodology with individuals, teams, and organizations.

Introduction

Motivation is concerned with the question, “*Why* do people do what they do?” Organization development (OD) practitioners have a keen interest in motivation, because much of their work centers around three questions:

1. What are people doing currently and *why*?
2. What do you want them to be doing instead and *why*?, and
3. How can you get from the current to the desired?

Various motivational theories have been offered by psychologists and other behavioral scientists over the last 50 years. As a body of literature, these theories have focused principally on five variables: needs, thinking (cognition), feelings, deciding (valuing), and doing (behavior). The five variables can be defined as follows:

- **Needs:** Urges or desires originating within us. Needs can be physical, personal, social, or spiritual.

Motivational System Mapping™

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- **Thinking:** Using one’s mind, taking in information and interpreting it. The key factors in the thinking process are.
 - Facts—Objective realities that can be proven with empirical evidence.
 - Beliefs—Subjective assumption, conclusion, or prediction.
- **Feeling:** Our emotions
- **Deciding:** Using one’s will, making up one’s mind, choosing. Choices are based on values, which are beliefs about what’s important in life. Values serve as criteria for making decisions and setting priorities.
- **Doing:** Actions or behaviors based on needs, facts, beliefs, feelings, and values.

In the process of meeting our needs, we think, we feel, we decide, and we do. These variables all interact in complex ways, contributing to what we call motivation. Table 1 shows the relationship between the five variables and selected theories/processes of personal and organizational change (Note: this is not intended to be an exhaustive list). It also underscores OD's interdisciplinary roots; in one way or another, most of these approaches have been adapted for OD purposes.

While these theories or processes rarely pay exclusive attention to one variable, they do tend to emphasize one or two over the others. For example, Maslow's work concentrated on needs and values, but he's most widely known for his hierarchy of needs. Gestalt therapy emphasizes thinking (perception and beliefs) and behavior. Cognitive-behavioral therapy looks at both thinking and doing, but the focus is on changing beliefs in order to bring about behavior change.

Behavioral therapy focuses on doing, arguing that it's unnecessary to even postulate the existence of beliefs and values. Management by objectives sets goals based on thinking and deciding, but the primary thrust is toward putting those goals into concrete action (behavior).

In addition, most motivational theories contend that one or two variables are causes while others are effects. For instance, proponents of emotional intelligence argue that listening and responding to employee feelings (behaviors) builds trust and a sense of community (beliefs). Participative management is based on the view that greater employee involvement (behavior) increases their sense of ownership and commitment (values).

A Systems Approach to Motivation

The problem with emphasizing one or two motivational variables over others is that

important information about why people do what they do can be lost or neglected. One way to avoid this problem is by using systems thinking. Peter Vaill (1996) explained that:

Systems thinking is not a reductionistic task through which we search for the one or two factors that 'explain' a phenomenon. Instead, systems thinking asks its practitioner *simultaneously* to hold the whole in mind and to investigate the interactions of the component elements of the whole—all the component elements, not just the two or three most obvious and easy to examine—and to investigate the relation of the whole to its larger environment. (p. 109)

There are closed and open systems. A closed system is isolated from its environment, while an open system receives inputs from its environment and acts on the environment through outputs. Human systems are open systems; they can't be understood completely through reductionistic, analytical thinking. Cognitive, affective and behavioral variables all contribute to motivation within the system, therefore it isn't necessary to figure out which variables are more important—or even what's a cause and what's an effect. The important thing is to consider them all, notice their dynamic interconnections, and use this information to foster positive change. The Motivational System Model does this.

The Motivational System Model, depicted in Figure 1, consists of four interrelated loops focusing on the personal, interpersonal, team, and organizational levels, and the larger environmental context within which the four levels function. The larger context, which encompasses everything outside impacting the four levels, includes communities, economies, societies, and the world. Viewing organizations in this way is consistent with the OD Network's

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Table 1
The Relationship Between Five Motivational Variables and Selected Theories/Processes of Personal and Organizational Change

Motivational Variables	Selected Theories/Processes of Personal and Organizational Change	
NEEDS (drives, urges)	Maslow's need hierarchy Herzberg's motivational theory McClelland's acquired needs for achievement, affiliation, and power Alderfer's ERG theory Psychoanalytic theory	
THINKING (facts, beliefs, perceptions)	Expectancy theory Consistency theory Personal construct psychology Gestalt therapy Cognitive-behavioral therapy Rational-emotive therapy McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y Bandura's perceived self-efficacy Theory	
FEELINGS (emotions)	Emotional intelligence Client-centered psychotherapy Personal growth groups (T-groups) Appreciative Inquiry Primal therapy Psychodrama Systematic desensitization, in vivo desensitization, implosive therapy, flooding	Stress management Meditation
DECIDING (values)	Values clarification Affective education Awareness building Equity theory Path-goal theory Exchange theory Psychological contract Strategic planning Cost/benefit analysis	Envisioning Culture assessment and change Normative OD approaches Values-based leadership Participative management Spirituality in the workplace
DOING (behavior)	Classical and operant conditioning Behavior therapy Organizational behavior modification Reinforcement theory Social learning theory Behavior modeling Role playing with feedback Management by objectives (MBO)	Benchmarking Empowerment Process improvement (TQM, CQI, etc.) Downsizing, re-engineering

An individual moves around the personal loop a hundred or more times a day, usually without awareness of the movement or its underlying motivation.

statement of values, which states: "We demonstrate our appreciation of systems by facilitating connectedness, a holistic approach and community" (see <http://www.odnetwork.org/missionvalues.html>). Also, most definitions of OD concern processes impacting individuals, work groups, and organizations (see, for example, Cummings & Worley, 2000; French & Bell, 1999). Burke (1997) described OD as inter, working between people and systems. Argyris (1997) stressed the importance of integrating the individual and the organization. Anderson and Ackerman-Anderson (2001) discussed the importance of focusing on the person and the organization in transformational change.

I refer to the personal loop as personality, and the interpersonal, team, and organization loops as three levels of organizational culture. The four levels become increasingly complex as we move from the personal to the organization. Overall organization culture is the most complex, because it includes all the individuals, interpersonal relationships, and teams within a whole organization.

Human systems have a natural tendency toward wholeness or integration (Morgan, 1986), but many factors, such as distorted facts and beliefs, negative feelings, and interpersonal conflict represent barriers to this. A good way to improve results, therefore, is to identify and minimize such barriers so the entire system can function more effectively. This requires an understanding of the personal, interpersonal, team, and organizational loops.

An individual moves around the personal loop a hundred or more times a day, usually without awareness of the movement or its underlying motivation. There's constant feedback among the variables as they endeavor to fulfill needs. Moreover, since people don't

live in a vacuum—interpersonal relationships, teams, and organizations consist of individuals—complex interrelationships exist among the four loops. They're inextricably linked, representing four interdependent elements of a larger whole. Culture shapes personality; personality shapes culture. The number of interactions and their complexity increases dramatically as we shift from the personal to the interpersonal and team levels, and becomes incalculable at the organizational level. To be effective, OD practitioners and other change agents must be able to shift their focus flexibly among these four levels of abstraction.

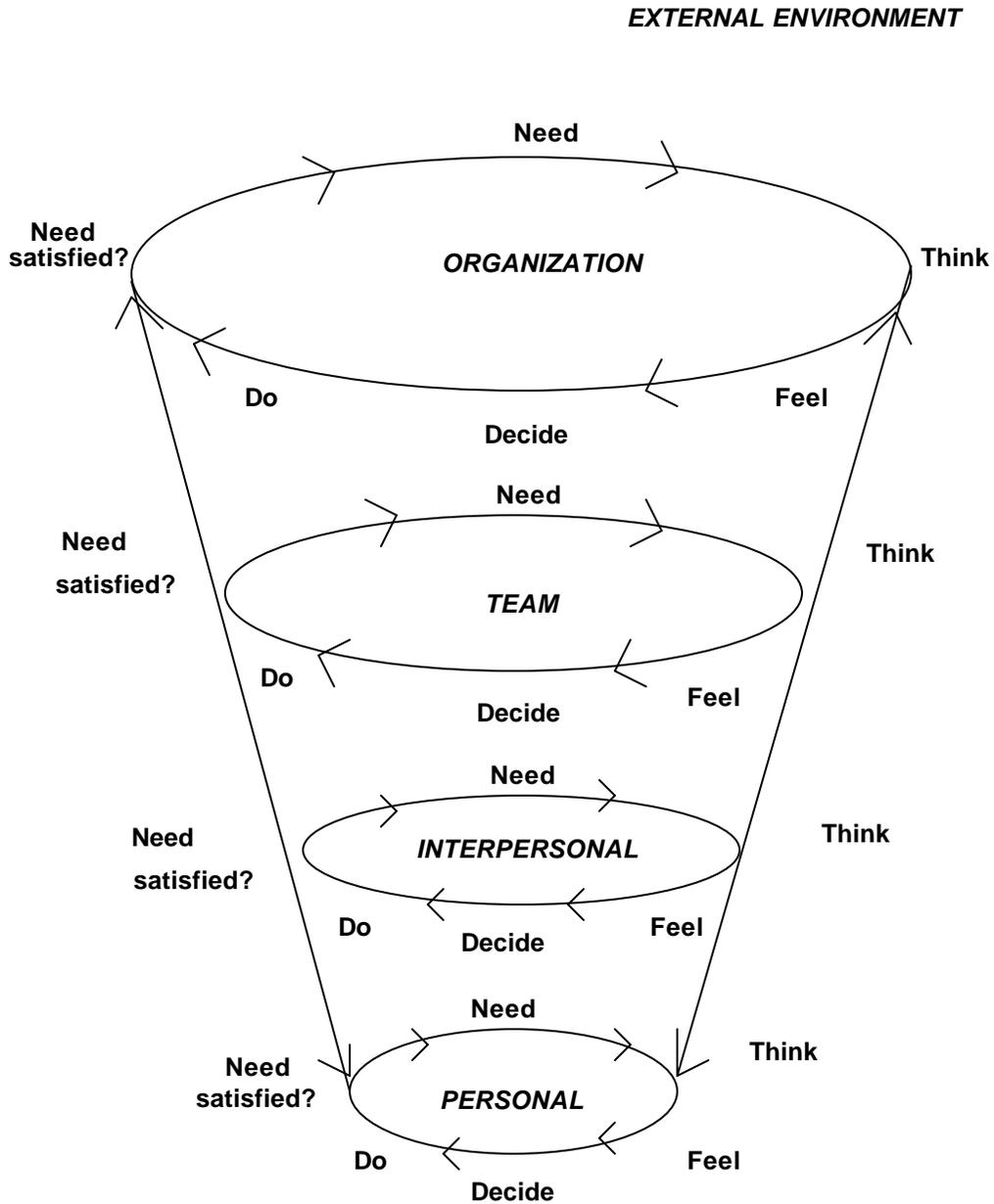
Overview of Motivational System Mapping™

Motivational System Mapping (MSM) is a methodology for assessing the variables within the Motivational System Model (Hultman, 2002). It can be used to focus on any one of the four levels in the Model, or to look for relationships and disconnects among levels. It is intended to help people identify, organize, and use information relevant to their issues and concerns. This is done by asking questions to foster self-discovery, allowing people to retain responsibility for themselves, establish clarity about their vision, and take ownership of both the causes of and solutions to their problems.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation for MSM has been laid in a variety of disciplines. In describing his theory of cognitive and behavioral change, Rokeach (1973) said, "A...method for inducing change is to expose a person to information about his own belief system, or to selected features of it, in order to make him consciously aware of certain contradictions that chronically exist within it below the level of awareness...information about contradictions within one's belief system that are perceived to be incompatible with self-conceptions should motivate cognitive and behavioral change that

Figure 1
Motivational System Model



will remove or reduce incompetent or immoral self-conceptions” (pp. 233-234).

Consistent with this approach, Senge (1990) said, “A useful starting exercise for learning how to focus more clearly on desired results is to take any particular goal or aspect of your vision. First imagine that the goal is fully realized. Then ask yourself the question, ‘If I actually had this, what would it get me?’ What people often discover is that the answer to that question reveals ‘deeper’ desires lying behind the goal” (p. 164). The questions asked

Emotional and behavioral problems are dealt with by challenging irrational beliefs, because they can distort our interpretations.

during MSM often tap into deeper meanings that increase self-understanding. For example, asking someone, “What’s the most important thing in your life?”, and following it up with, “Why is that important?” helps them get at

something deeper within themselves. This allows the person to see what’s driving what, and to focus more intently on deeper meanings and motives.

There’s also some overlap between methods suggested by MSM and personal construct psychology, which focuses on identifying the constructs (beliefs and values) people use to understand themselves and their world. One approach is called *laddering*, which uses facilitative questions to help people process the meaning of their responses. A variation of this, called *dialectical laddering*, relies on a series of questions to help people identify and resolve value conflicts. Neimeyer (1993) described a dialectical ladder as, “...a ladder whose antithetical construct poles are reconciled in a higher order integration or synthesis. When such integration is successful, dialectical laddering provides not

only an assessment of the structure of the client’s current system, but also a series of guideposts pointing toward new potentials to be explored in therapy and in daily life” (p. 63).

A method like this can be useful when someone is experiencing a basic dilemma between two alternatives that both seem bad. In situations like these, it can be helpful to ask:

- *Can you find an alternative that would reconcile these two poles?, and*
- *How would that differ from the two polar extremes?*

Similarities also exist between MSM and cognitive therapy (see, for example, Beck, 1976, and Ellis, 1973). Cognitive therapists take the position that it’s our interpretations of events that elicit emotional and behavioral responses. Emotional and behavioral problems are dealt with by challenging irrational beliefs, because they can distort our interpretations. A cognitive therapist plays an active role in challenging irrational beliefs and cognitive restructuring, skills requiring specialized training. In contrast, the MSM coach facilitates client self-assessment. While MSM undoubtedly has some therapeutic outcomes, its purpose is primarily developmental and educational.

MSM and Appreciative Inquiry

A brief comparison between MSM and Appreciative Inquiry (AI) might be useful, since the latter approach to OD is growing in popularity and influence. Instead of focusing on traditional problem-solving, AI seeks to find what’s right in organizations. Watkins and Cooperrider (2000) described AI as, “An articulated theory that rationalizes and reinforces the habit of mind that moves through the world in a generative frame, seeking and finding images of the possible rather than scenes of disaster and despair” (p. 6). AI practitioners help organizations articulate key

ingredients in past successes and then to use those as the basis for creating a positive future.

AI is a new movement in OD based on a philosophy of practicing the positive (see, for example, Watkins & Mohr, 2000; Cooperrider, et al, 2000), while MSM is a specific methodology for identifying and dealing with system issues. While AI leads organizations to a focus on the positive, MSM is a balance model

that looks at both driving and restraining forces in the tradition of Kurt Lewin's force field analysis (Lewin, 1947). My experience indicates that personal, interpersonal, team, and organizational problems usually stem from underlying issues that can't be identified or resolved by focusing on the positive alone.

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MSM is based on the belief that under favorable conditions—those encouraging self-acceptance and trust—people will naturally move toward growth; therefore, the process starts wherever the client is ready to work and builds from there. The goal is to construct a map of the relevant factors in a situation so patterns and relationships can be identified. These patterns and relationships then help to focus development.

Understanding can be distorted by guiding a client toward either the positive or the negative. MSM attempts to minimize distortion by having the client decide what direction to take. If the client wants to talk about the positive or the negative, MSM accommodates them either way. Thomas Head (2000) makes the point that AI eliminates resistance to change because of the positive focus. MSM lowers resistance because the client decides the direction.

This doesn't mean that MSM is value-free. No OD methodology is totally value-free, nor

do I think this is desirable. Even if you only ask questions and refrain from offering recommendations, you steer the process, consciously or unconsciously, by the questions you choose. The important thing is to make your biases known. When I use MSM, my underlying biases are toward:

- Seeking balance within the Motivational System Model,
- Moving the Motivational System Model away from fragmentation and toward wholeness,
- Separating causes from symptoms of problems, and
- Focusing interventions on causes.

Also, while it's theoretically possible to use MSM by only asking questions, in actual practice I've never employed it this way. As I listen to a client, I gain insights into symptoms, causes, patterns and themes, consequences, and actions. I offer these insights when I think it's appropriate, although my bias is toward being patient, giving clients time to gain their own insights. I will also offer my own recommendations, based on my biases toward balance, wholeness, and remedies that deal with causes.

One final point is that a thin line exists between assessment and intervention (Argyris, 1970; Burke, 1982). MSM is essentially an assessment method, but people gain insights during the process that change them, and anything producing positive change represents an intervention. Change in one belief or value has an impact on other beliefs and values because they're structurally and functionally related. Regarding this, Harrison (1969, p. 66) said, "Concepts are too closely and complexly linked to change one or two relationships in isolation. One change leads to another, pretty soon a major reorganization is going on." While MSM produces insight, its overall goal is to encourage change that helps people and organizations actualize their potential more fully.

MSM with Individuals

A coach can use MSM to help a person gain in self-understanding, clarify personal/professional mission and vision, locate driving and constraining forces, and develop a strategy for serving mission and bringing vision into being.

The key skills in MSM are knowing what questions to ask and classifying responses according to the variables in the Motivational System Model. For example, a question like, "What options do you see?" gets at beliefs and perceived facts. Following up with, "What do you want to do?" moves the discussion to values. Table 2, Navigating the Motivational System Model, provides examples of questions relating to the five variables: needs, thinking, feelings, deciding, and doing.

As the client responds to questions, the coach writes down all responses in the appropriate category on pieces of note paper or sheets of easel paper. You can start your questioning anywhere, which is consistent with the system concept of equifinality. Morgan (1986) had this to say about *equifinality*: "Living systems have flexible patterns of organization that allow the achievement of specific results from different starting points with different resources in different ways" (p. 47). Most human problems can be looked at from more than one perspective and have more than one solution. Therefore, begin where the person is motivated to work and build from there.

As the process progresses the note paper begins to fill in, and the client sees patterns and relationships between bits of information—the "map" becomes easier to understand. Clients often have many "ah hahs" during this experience, discovering relationships between beliefs, feelings, values, and behaviors. They start synthesizing seemingly unrelated pieces of information, allowing them to work toward a deeper level of personal integration.

Change can be facilitated by asking questions about patterns/themes, positive and negative consequences, and possible actions.

Some questions relating to these areas are:

Patterns/Themes:

What are the symptoms/causes?

What patterns or themes do you see emerging?

What connections do you see between these responses?

What relationships do you see between your values and feelings, feelings and beliefs, beliefs and values, values and behaviors?

Consequences:

What positive consequences do you see? How can you capitalize on these consequences more fully?

What barriers exist?

How can you overcome or minimize these barriers?

Actions:

What actions can you take?

How would those actions allow you to fulfill your purposes/dreams?

What specifically are you prepared to do and by when?

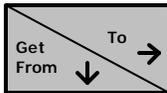
What resources do you have?

What additional resources do you need?

How can you get these resources?

How long MSM will take depends on the situation and the degree of insight people have about the issues. If someone is upset emotionally, they'll need to vent their feelings before getting into the questions. Answering the questions is a more analytical process, and emotions can cloud that process. Emotional issues must be dealt with before the person can focus on MSM. It will take people capable of more insight less time to go through the process than others. Also, it's easier for some people to be open and talk about feelings. I've worked with people who moved through the process in a few hours, while others took many meetings over a period of time. I prefer a

Table 2
Navigating the Motivational System Model



	NEED	THINK	FEEL	DECIDE	DO
NEED	<p>What are your needs? What needs are/aren't being satisfied? What are some of your other needs? How have your needs changed?</p>	<p>How could you satisfy your needs? Are there better ways to satisfy your needs? How will these changes in needs impact your thinking?</p>	<p>How would you feel if you couldn't satisfy that need?</p>	<p>How do you decide the best ways to satisfy your needs? How will these changes in needs impact your decisions?</p>	<p>Does that satisfy your needs? What do you get by doing that? How will these changes in needs impact your actions?</p>
THINK	<p>How does that thinking allow you to meet your needs? Does that thinking keep you from meeting your needs? Would changing those thoughts allow you to meet your needs? What impact does your thinking have on other's needs?</p>	<p>What do you think about yourself/others/the organization? What are your beliefs about that? What's another way of looking at this? What keeps you from changing your thinking? What do you think is going to happen? How do you know that's true? What would happen if you changed your thinking? What would happen if you didn't change your thinking?</p>	<p>How do those thoughts make you feel? How would you feel if that happened? How would others feel if that happened?</p>	<p>What factors do you consider when making a decision? What other input will you need before making a decision? What thinking went into this decision? Who else should be involved in making this decision? Do some people's ideas carry more weight than others? How could you change that decision? How do you evaluate your decisions?</p>	<p>How could you put those thoughts into action? What keeps you from doing that? How could you improve your actions? What would you gain if you changed your behavior? What would you lose if you don't change your behavior? What impact do your thoughts have on other's actions? How do you evaluate your actions?</p>
FEEL	<p>How strongly do you feel about satisfying that need?</p>	<p>How do your feelings affect your thoughts?</p>	<p>What are your feelings? What other feelings do you have?</p>	<p>How do those feelings affect your decisions?</p>	<p>How do those feelings affect your actions?</p>
DECIDE	<p>How would that decision allow you to satisfy your needs? What impact does that decision have on other's needs? How do you decide what needs to focus on?</p>	<p>What thoughts led to that decision? What are the pros and cons? What would the costs/benefits be of that decision? What are the potential consequences of that decision? What are the tradeoffs? Are they acceptable? What do you think will happen if you decide to do that? What do others think about your decisions?</p>	<p>How do you feel about your decision? How would that decision make you feel? How will you feel if your decision doesn't work out? How do others feel about the decision? What concerns do you have about the decision?</p>	<p>What is your mission/vision? What values do you consider in working toward your mission/vision? How do you determine your values? What criteria do you use in making decisions? What are your priorities? How could you improve your decisions? Who makes those decisions?</p>	<p>How could you put those decisions into action? What do you want to do? What impact do your decisions have on what others do? What are the most important things you can do?</p>
DO	<p>How does this action allow you to satisfy your needs? What other actions could you take to satisfy your needs?</p>	<p>What's the thinking behind those actions? How well do the actions work? What else do you think you could do? How could you change your thinking?</p>	<p>How did you feel about doing that? How would you feel if those actions didn't work?</p>	<p>What impact do your actions have on your decisions? What impact do other people's actions have on your decisions?</p>	<p>What behaviors have you tried? What else could you do? What behaviors do you want to keep? What behaviors do you want to change? What new behaviors do you want to add?</p>

MSM has the added benefit of helping to foster greater trust and cohesiveness, because everyone is contributing in the process.

marathon session away from the workplace, where the person can focus intently on their situation without interruptions. If you have an entire day set aside for this, you get a sense for whether or not it continues to be productive. If you reach a point of diminishing return, quit for the day and pick it up later.

At other times long sessions aren't feasible due to time constraints. At the end of a session, I leave all my notes with them to ponder until our next meeting. Often the person gains insights between sessions that help frame the next meeting. I tell them that the data are theirs, not mine, and that the information is confidential. When coaching concludes, I leave all my notes with the person. They sometimes refer back to their notes months or even years later, gauging progress and gaining additional insights. This builds self-confidence and helps them deal with new issues more effectively.

MSM With Teams and Organizations

MSM can also be used with teams and organizations. The questioning process allows a team to gain greater ownership of its issues and solutions. MSM has the added benefit of helping to foster greater trust and cohesiveness, because everyone is contributing in the process. It also can increase the integration or alignment among individual, team and organizational values, and enhance the team's confidence and skill in identifying and dealing with its issues. Specifically MSM can help a team or organization do the following:

1. Define or redefine its mission and vision
2. Establish goals for serving its mission and bringing its vision into being
3. Identify current needs, facts, beliefs, feelings, values and behaviors

4. Identify patterns and themes among current needs, facts, beliefs, feelings, values and behaviors
5. Assess positive and negative consequences of current needs, facts, beliefs, feelings, values and behaviors
6. Identify changes needed to build on the positive and overcome the negative
7. Develop a plan for development and building alignment
8. Monitor results and make necessary adjustments

The process with a team is much the same as with an individual. The major difference is that the focus of attention is on the team instead of a person. After clarifying expectations, I define the variables in the Motivational System Model (needs, thinking, feelings, deciding, and doing). I write the name of each variable at the top of a separate sheet of easel paper, and post them conspicuously around the room. Then I ask questions to generate information about the five motivational variables. Whenever someone makes a comment, I write it on the appropriate sheet of paper. As the sheets begin to fill up, members spot patterns and relationship among responses (sometimes I divide team members into subgroups and they generate this information on their own). Once their issues become clearer, members are then able to generate potential solutions. At the end of the session, I compile all the information and distribute it to team members.

It's common for information raised by different team members to be contradictory. In fact, one of the goals of MSM is to bring such differences out in the open. The discussions that occur during MSM are most constructive if people avoid disagreeing over the validity of each other's perceptions and simply see this as data. Many value conflicts between people or among members of a team occur because people become polarized in their positions. Such conflicts can often be resolved by helping

them move from dualistic to dialectical thinking, seeking a synthesis of the different positions (finding common ground), or looking beneath the values causing conflict to locate deeper shared values.

When MSM is used with organizations, it has the power to transform large systems. I meet with the leadership team and take them through the process much as described in the section on working with teams. The difference is that they are focusing on the whole organization, not on the leadership team itself. There's often a lot at stake in these sessions, because everyone is affected by the outcome. Dialogue among leaders regarding the state of the organization and its future can be very intense and meaningful. The process serves as a reality-check on the viability of an organization's culture, helping leaders spot distorted or outmoded assumptions, values, and norms that are undermining morale, performance, and results.

Summary

It's crucial for OD practitioners and other change agents to have a thorough understanding of human motivation. Motivational theories have tended to focus on one or two variables, neglecting others that might help us understand more fully why people do what they do. Motivational System Mapping (MSM) uses a systems approach to assess five key variables in motivation: needs, thinking, feelings, deciding, and doing. The theoretical foundation for MSM was presented, and techniques for using it with individuals, teams, and organizations were described.

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