

ON INTERVENTION

What is it?

The term “intervention” is used in Organizational Development to talk about how a consultant, especially a process consultant can help an organization stop, review, re-direct and restart itself. Intervention has become the primary tool for planning and introducing change in an organization.

What does it do?

Intervenors may:

- Facilitate teams of people through work sessions ranging from Strategic, Operational and Business planning to Risk Assessments on trends facing the organization, to consensus seeking on the identification and management of contentious issues (e.g. harmonizing the views of stakeholders on supply management of a given agricultural commodity);
- Act as moderators to bring about large group consensus, especially for bridging gaps between an organization’s constituencies and its own policies (e.g. establishing an overarching strategy such as the Canadian Forestry Strategy)
- Act as neutral third parties in gathering information about the organization and its relationships with partners, clients, and peers (e.g. finding out what stakeholder industries think about the organization);
- Provide training to target groups of learners aimed at making a change in the culture of the organization, (e.g. a culture of emotional intelligence aimed at greater productivity);
- Act as process consultants to guide the people of the organization in understanding, defining, mapping and integrating processes, both managerial and operational, (e.g. integrating strategy to operations to financial to HR management).

In addition, intervenors are likely to:

- Design the underlying processes necessary to support facilitated or moderated sessions, training events, or the interventions themselves;

- Provide mentoring or coaching to those internal change agents who are playing pivotal roles in bringing about change in the organization through their own interventions;
- Provide process advice as needed, and in support of change interventions in the organization.

What do it?

Intervention is the “hamburger helper” of an organization. The consultant extends the employee complement of the client organization, helps the senior level of the organization identify needed changes, and assists the rank and file in carrying them out with the least amount of fuss and bother. Often, the organization’s leadership knows that something “has to be done”, but doesn’t have the people on the ground to actually do the work. The intervenor places a framework on the change needed, and moves it forward quickly and effectively, to the benefit of all stakeholders.

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