

“... we are helping make OD a discipline accessible to everyone in the organization. How do we capitalize on this growing awareness and capability and help organizations increase their maturity in using OD to build and sustain effective organizations?”

Maturing Toward Enterprise Organization Development Capability

By Marisa Sanchez

As organization development practitioners, we follow the proverb “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.” Over the past several decades since our field was founded, we have been teaching many men and women to fish – to lead, work effectively with others, run productive meetings, and build successful organizations. We teach by example, through coaching, and by facilitating.

Leaders, managers, and employees in organizations in which we have worked have been exposed to organization development-related work through leadership development programs, 360 feedback, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, performance management, feedback training, emotional intelligence, change management, how to have difficult conversations, and the use of self – just to name a few. They have read books on leadership like Jim Collins’ classic *Good to Great* and Tom Roth’s *StrengthsFinder 2.0* as well as books on change like Spencer Johnson’s popular *Who Moved my Cheese* and Malcolm Gladwell’s *The Tipping Point*.

As we look back over our collective work as OD practitioners, we must recognize that our client systems have, on the whole, evolved. Naturally, they have different levels of capability, but with an emphasis in organizations over the past three decades or so on leadership development, management best practices, and change management capabilities, many are integrating organization development practice into their work.

As we teach our clients to fish, we are

helping make OD a discipline accessible to everyone in the organization. How do we capitalize on this growing awareness and capability and help organizations increase their maturity in using OD to build and sustain effective organizations?

The Enterprise Organization Development Maturity Model

Maturity models have been developed for many disciplines: software development, acquisition, and safety and security are some familiar examples. Maturity models chart levels of increasing capability across an organization and provide roadmaps for developing specific capabilities. Many maturity models describe four to six levels of maturity in which the capability not only increases in breadth across the organization but also continuously evolves based on reflection and learning. With that concept in mind, I developed the Enterprise Organization Development Maturity Model™ to support efforts to increase the overall organization development capability across an enterprise.

This model is in its infant stage of development. It represents an attempt to innovatively apply a well-established concept of capability maturity from other fields to the organization development field. My hope is that in introducing this model to OD practitioners, it can be applied and tested in organizations to further evolve the framework, collect case studies, and determine value.

The Enterprise Organization Development Maturity Model is organized into

maturity levels and enabler levels. The five maturity levels reflect the increasing numbers of leaders, managers, and employees who use OD practices in their respective roles in the organization. *Figure 1* graphically depicts the five maturity levels.

- » **Maturity Level 1: Ad Hoc.** Few people in the organization use OD practices. OD activities are isolated. No common OD practices have been established. OD activities are successful because of the heroic efforts of individual experts.
- » **Maturity Level 2: OD Center of Excellence.** The organization has a pool of OD-skilled resources who apply common OD practices to efforts throughout the organization.
- » **Maturity Level 3: OD Community of Practice.** The organization contains pockets of leaders, managers, and employees who are familiar with and use common OD practices in their roles.
- » **Maturity Level 4: Enterprise-wide OD Capability.** Most leaders, managers, and employees are familiar with and use common OD practices in their roles.
- » **Maturity Level 5: Integrated OD Capability.** Most of the organization's leaders, managers, and employees use common OD practices appropriate to their roles and OD activities are coordinated and integrated across the enterprise.

While maturity levels reflect the breadth of the organization employing organization development, enabler levels represent the critical success factors that must be in place for the organization to achieve a specific maturity level. These five enabler levels also build upon one another. Organizations use the enablers to achieve a specific



Figure 1. Maturity Levels of the Enterprise Organization Development Maturity Model

maturity level (i.e., move from one maturity level to another). *Figure 2* illustrates the five enabler levels.

- » **Enabler Level 1: Common Practices.** Organizations can more easily mature their overall OD capability when the same OD practices (frameworks, language, values, processes, tools) are used across the organization. An example of an organization's set of common OD practices might include selected team building models, change management methodology, strategic planning framework and tools, and organizational design process and tools. The intent here is not to limit use to a minimal set of practices but to establish a common menu of practices to be used as appropriate. Thus, the foundation enabler is to define a set of common OD practices (and guidance on how to use those practices) appropriate for the maturity level. This model does not suggest that some practices are more mature than others. Maturity is defined by the breadth of the organization using a defined set of OD practices, not an evaluation of the sophistication of the OD practices themselves.
- » **Enabler Level 2: Community.** Establishing a community of those in the organization applying OD practices increases performance, supports the evolution of the common practices through feedback and learning, and increases the visibility of OD. Just as many knowledge management communities are structured, the organization would continue to have a centralized champion/manager/team that is responsible for convening the community, facilitating continuous improvement, maintaining the common practices, and ensuring appropriate training. The community of practitioners, however, increases across the organization with each maturity level.
- » **Enabler Level 3: Training.** The community is trained on the common OD practices for community members'

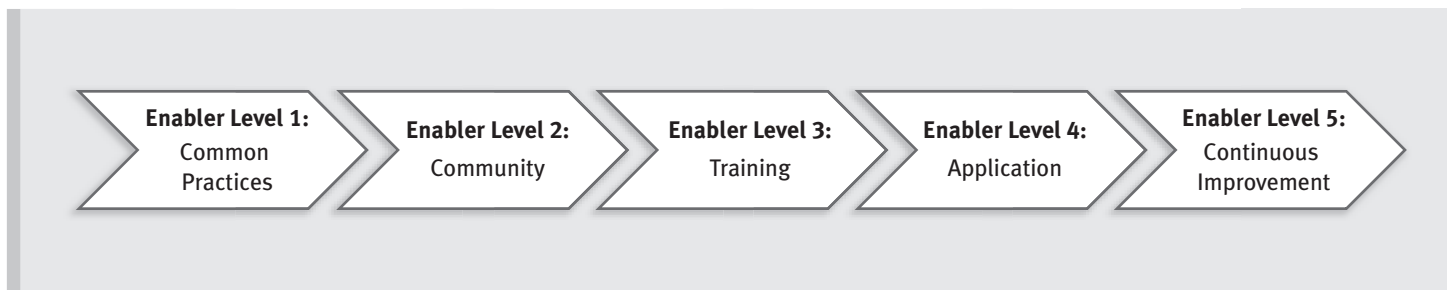


Figure 2. Enabler levels of the Enterprise Organization Development Maturity Model

specific roles in the organization. An OD competency model customized to the community could be developed to inform the training curriculum. Training could include coursework, mentoring/shadowing programs, on-the-job training, and coaching.

- » **Enabler Level 4: Application.** The community skillfully applies the common OD practices per their own roles. For example, managers and employees may

practices, including any external consultants who will be providing services to the organization.

- » Apply the set of established common OD practices as Center of Excellence consultants to the leaders and managers of the organization.
- » Develop and use continuous improvement processes to evolve the common set of OD practices as well as the use of those practices in the organization.

competency of the OD consultant working with that client. Organizations working at this level of maturity have the least control over when and what type of OD services are provided to the organization and the quality of those services.

Maturity Level 2: OD Center of Excellence.

Organizations have an established OD function, staffed with OD consultants who share a common goal of not only providing excellent service to clients but also building a common level of familiarity with OD practices across clients. The OD consultants may be organized in a centralized model or a matrix model, in which the OD consultants are assigned to various business units with dotted line relationships back to a central OD champion/sponsor/team. The consultants may even use a self-directed team approach. Regardless of how the community of OD consultants is organized, consultants work from a common set of OD practices intended to be used by well-trained OD professionals, and they have processes in place to reflect on and evolve those practices. External OD consultants engage with the organization via the OD Center of Excellence so that the organization ensures consistent use of practices and maintains awareness of all OD activities being undertaken by the organization.

This level of maturity may be sufficient for many organizations; however, the community is limited to OD professionals. Other organizations who want their leaders, managers, and employees to be able to use OD practices to build and maintain their own healthy teams and sub-organizations may find that they need to expand the community, moving to Maturity Level 3.

Maturity Level 3: OD Community of Practice. Organizations at this level still will have an OD Center of Excellence staffed by OD consultants to support very large or complicated projects or new types of OD projects, but the organization has broadened its community to leaders, managers, and employees who are equipped to apply some OD practices to support the work of their own sub-organizations. The role of the OD Center of Excellence also

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apply the same practice in different ways, but they have each been trained on those practices and share a common language.

- » **Enabler Level 5: Continuous Improvement.** The community follows continuous improvement processes to reflect on and refine its common OD practices, tailoring them for the organization's own business use and evolving them as industry OD practices evolve.

In the Enterprise Organization Development Maturity Model, enabler levels are used to achieve the desired level of maturity. For example, an organization would implement all five enabler levels corresponding to Maturity Level 2 to achieve Maturity Level 2:

- » Establish common OD practices for use by the OD consultants within the OD Center of Excellence.
- » Form a team of internal OD consultants or frequently-hired external consultants connected with the Center of Excellence.
- » Train the team on the common OD

Table 1 (next page) outlines how the five enabler levels are used to build the capability of the organization for each maturity level.

Now that the model has been introduced, I can illustrate organizations at each of the maturity levels.

Maturity Level 1: Ad Hoc. Organizations use the services of internal or external OD consultants sporadically and on isolated projects. Internal OD consultants may be distributed in various parts of the organization or centralized and report to an OD champion, such as a Director of OD or HR. However, even in a centralized model, the OD consultants do not draw from a common set of OD practices but from their individual experiences. External OD consultants may contract separately with business managers with no connection to other OD consultants working in the organization. Each consultant-client relationship is an isolated relationship; there is no common level of knowledge or skill the OD consultants seek to build across their clients. OD work is successful based on the

Table 1. *Achieving Maturity through the Enterprise Organization Development Maturity Model*

	EL 1: Common Practices	EL 2: Community	EL 3: Training	EL 4: Application	EL 5: Continuous Improvement
ML 1: Ad Hoc	No common OD practices exist. Parts of the organization embark on isolated OD activities. OD efforts are successful due to the efforts of individual OD professionals working in the organization. There is no standard practice, defined OD community, training, consistent application of OD, or processes to support continuous improvement.				
ML 2: OD Center of Excellence	A common set of practices are developed to be used by OD professionals.	A small group of internal or frequently called-upon external OD professionals is formed to use the organization's common OD practices.	All OD professionals are trained to use the common OD practices.	Trained OD professionals apply the common OD practices to support OD activities in the organization.	Continuous improvement processes are defined and implemented to support OD professionals in refining the common practices and training requirements.
ML 3: OD Community of Practice	A common set of practices are developed to be used by a subset of leaders, managers, and employees appropriate to their specific roles.	An initial community of leaders, managers, and employees is formed to use the common practices appropriate to their roles.	The initial community is trained to use the common OD practices specific to their roles.	The initial community applies the common OD practices in their roles.	Processes are defined and implemented to support the initial community in refining the common OD practices and training requirements.
ML 4: Enterprise-wide OD Capability	A common set of practices are developed to be used by all leaders, managers, and employees appropriate to their specific roles.	Everyone in the organization uses the common OD practices appropriate to their roles.	The entire enterprise is trained to use the common OD practices specific to their roles.	The entire enterprise uses the common OD practices in their roles.	Processes are defined and implemented to support the entire enterprise in refining the common OD practices and training requirements.
ML 5: Integrated OD Capability	A common set of OD practices are developed that incorporate program management tools that support integration of OD efforts across the enterprise.	Everyone in the organization leverages the common OD practices to support integration of OD efforts across the enterprise.	The entire enterprise is trained to identify areas of potential integration and coordination of OD activities across the enterprise.	OD activities are coordinated and integrated across the enterprise.	Processes are defined and implemented to support refining the coordination and integration of OD activities across the enterprise.

broadens to include training, convening community members for reflection and continuous improvement of the practices, and developing and maintaining the set of OD practices by role (for example, team leader, business unit manager, and employee). This broader community may consist of leaders, managers, and employees in one business unit or pockets of leaders, managers, employees from various parts of the organization.

Moving from Maturity Level 2 to Maturity Level 3 is quite significant in that the organization is broadening its community from OD professionals to consumers of OD and empowering those consumers to drive some level of OD activity in their sub-organizations. Depending on the size of the organization, moving from Maturity Level 3 to Maturity Level 4 may be a very large effort or fairly manageable. Small or mid-sized organizations might experience only incremental cost to moving

to Maturity Level 4 to enterprise-wide capability.

Maturity Level 4: Enterprise-wide OD Capability. At this very high level of maturity, everyone in the organization is empowered to apply some OD practices to their work. In addition to the role the OD Center of Excellence plays in Maturity Level 3, in Maturity Level 4, the Center of Excellence might develop and maintain common OD practices for all organization roles and

develop enterprise-wide training programs on those practices. Depending on the size of the organization, such training programs might include online training, self-directed intranet sites with resources, knowledge management databases of the OD practices as well as examples and tutorials. Performance management practices might be expanded to include performance expectations and evaluation on the skillful use of OD practices. Finally, continuous improvement processes to evolve the practices involve some systemic assessment of OD performance across the enterprise.

Although we could say that organizations always benefit from the application of OD principles and practices, deciding on the desired maturity level requires consideration of the benefits as they relate to the costs of equipping large numbers within the organization with the appropriate skills. The higher the desired maturity level, the higher the costs in terms of infrastructure and training to achieve and maintain that level of maturity. It may be quite sufficient for many organizations to be at a Maturity Level 2 with a robust and valued OD Center of Excellence that can provide OD services as necessary and appropriate to achieving and sustaining a healthy organization.

Maturity Level 5: Integrated OD Capability. OD activities across the enterprise can be integrated at this maturity level because all leaders, managers, and employees are equipped to use some level of OD practice in their work. Integrated OD capability requires that the practices themselves incorporate program management processes to plan and manage OD work in an integrated manner. For example, OD practices might be integrated and managed as a program to support ten major enterprise-wide strategic initiatives aimed at increasing customer satisfaction. Or multiple departments that comprise a business unit might employ a common defined set of OD practices to manage as an integrated program for the organizational redesign efforts of all departments. The level of experience of the entire organization with OD practices allows organizations at this

level of maturity to train their employees on how to identify opportunities for integration, apply OD practices strategically across the enterprise, and continuously evolve methods to facilitate the integrated application of OD practices.

Implementing the Enterprise Organization Development Maturity Model

How might an OD practitioner go about implementing this maturity model for a client organization? This maturity model can be used to assess the existing level of maturity of the enterprise's OD practices,

envision the desired level of maturity, and set a course of action to increase maturity.

Using the Enterprise Organization Development Maturity Model, an organization's level of maturity can be described using the lexicon of maturity and enabler levels as two coordinates. For example, ML 2, EL 5 signifies that this organization has fully achieved Maturity Level 2 having implemented all five (5) of the enablers for that maturity level. As another example, ML3, EL2 indicates that the organization has partially met Maturity Level 3, having reached Enabler Level 2 within that maturity level.

The first step in using the Enterprise Organization Development Maturity Model as an assessment tool is to assess the current maturity level. Does this organization have a pool of skilled resources who apply a defined set of common OD practices to

efforts throughout the organization? If so, this organization would be at a Maturity Level 2. Or perhaps this organization has pockets of leaders, managers, or employees who have some skill and are practicing common OD practices; if so, this organization would be at a Maturity Level 3. The enabler levels will indicate the degree of maturity within the level. For example, an organization might have pockets of employees using a common set of OD practices but these pockets have not been brought together into a community to learn from one another and further evolve the practices; this organization would be evaluated at ML3, EL1.

The next step is to decide on the desired maturity level for the organization. Although we could say that organizations always benefit from the application of OD principles and practices, deciding on the desired maturity level requires consideration of the benefits as they relate to the costs of equipping large numbers within the organization with the appropriate skills. The higher the desired maturity level, the higher the costs in terms of infrastructure and training to achieve and maintain that level of maturity. It may be quite sufficient for many organizations to be at a Maturity Level 2 with a robust and valued OD Center of Excellence that can provide OD services as necessary and appropriate to achieving and sustaining a healthy organization. The following are some considerations when deciding on the desired level of enterprise organization development maturity:

To what extent does the organization's culture resonate with the underlying values and principles of OD? High resonance might suggest the potential for this organization to move to high levels of maturity.

To what extent does the organization's work require attention to OD? Organizations that work in immature or quickly evolving markets, are entrepreneurial, are moving into more mature corporate life cycle stages, or are experiencing a lot of change might benefit from having more OD capability across the enterprise.

What percentage of employees would benefit from applying OD as a regular aspect of their work? Organizations that have the majority of employees who work

in complex team structures, matrix organizations, and virtual environments might benefit more from increased capability to apply OD practices.

As with other maturity models, organizations must decide what level of maturity is right for them. Not all organizations need to or even should strive for Maturity Level 4 or 5.

With the current and future states defined using this maturity model, organizations must launch a project – staffed, structured, and managed as a change project – to achieve the desired maturity level. The project plan to move the organization from its current to desired state would be organized around the enabler levels. The project plan would include detailed activities to create a common set of OD practices; establish appropriate communities to apply that common set of practices; train the members of the communities; support, measure, and monitor the application of the practices, and finally define processes to reflect on and evolve the practices themselves and use of the practices within the organization. *Table 1* presented earlier in this article can be used as a high level plan to begin to organize the activities by enabler level to achieve the desired maturity level.

Conclusion and Additional Research

Organization development practitioners are no longer the sole proprietors of organization development knowledge. Having more educated clients is a very good thing. Supporting them to increase their levels of OD capability requires us as OD practitioners to think about how we need to expand our value proposition. Supporting an organization to increase its own OD capabilities requires those of us in the OD profession to be willing to give up control over our subject matter expertise and empower others to do our work. Organization development is a helping profession. We cannot perform our work by building dependency but instead by preparing and encouraging our clients to be self-sufficient. As we perform OD services for our clients we simultaneously teach them to fish for themselves. Additionally,

as our clients decrease their dependence at some levels, we must be willing to step up to support them on increasingly complex, large, sophisticated OD projects that require nuanced skills of OD professionals. My premise for developing the Enterprise Organization Development Maturity Model is that the more people who use OD practices as a natural part of their work, the more visible and prevalent OD will become. And the more visible and prevalent the field of OD becomes, the more it can be recognized as the central discipline to creating and maintaining healthy organizations.

With this model initially defined, it is now time to move from theory to practice. One next step to do so is to issue a call for case studies of organizations that see themselves at one of the maturity levels described by the model or that are in the process of moving from one level of maturity to another. Case studies will provide the data to improve the model. Case studies can also illustrate the various levels of maturity and perhaps demonstrate the benefits organizations experience in achieving greater levels of organization development maturity. Second is to apply this maturity model to organizations that want to increase their OD maturity. Application of the model will test out the framework as well as support refinement of the steps necessary to implement each enabler level. Additionally, it may provide further information about potential new enablers required to achieve maturity. This applied research will involve OD professionals in providing the ultimate service to partner with clients to mature their organization development capabilities.

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