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DWG 2:

Organization Development and Interorganizational Cooperation – Interventions and Management Practices to Bridge Cultural Differences and Sustain Success

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Abstract

Key words: Interorganizational Cooperation, Organization Development, Intervention Practices

Interorganizational networks and collaborative ventures are growing ways of organizing to increase performance, improve problem-solving capabilities and gain competitive advantage in private economies as well as in the public sector. However when organizations set up partnerships and networks most prevailing models of management are of limited value as they

are mainly built around principles of organizational uniqueness, external competition and steering concepts based on lines of command and hierarchy. A new management model is required in order to bridge organizational egoism and to align aims, steering mechanisms, operative processes and cultures and to build a collaborative system that actually performs.

Based on our 20 years of research, consulting in the public and private sector and teaching on masters, postgraduate and doctoral level at the Institute of Organization Development and Group Dynamics (University of Klagenfurt/Vienna, Austria) our DWG is conceptualized as “research-to-practice workshop”. We will present key research findings and ask participants to apply them in their practice as consultants, (project)managers or coordinators of interorganizational cooperation and networks and as researchers interested in improving their practical skills in organization development and change.

We argue that for a more comprehensive approach to interorganizational development, classic OD-concepts as large group interventions, conference-models, project management e.g. have to be enriched to fully meet the specifics of loosely coupled organizational systems, multi-stakeholder realities and cultural differences, collaborative management and work processes across organizations. In an OD-practice perspective this means to start a planned but open process, driven forward by the needs and aspirations of those who are joining forces. This process has to be guided to ensure both, a process aligning participating organizations in standing together also in tough times but also in allowing for cultural differences and “uniqueness” between the partnering organizations as they are one of the sources for achieving collaborative success. A solid multi-referenced process to ensure the right involvement and engagement of all stakeholders might slow down and sometimes even complicate the process, but is inevitable to achieve sustaining results. Additionally developing and managing cooperation also has to look into the “inside of the cooperation” as the participating firm’s “collaborative capabilities” have a decisive impact on the whole cooperative system and determine its ability to perform.

In our workshop we will focus an OD-perspective tailored to the specifics of interorganizational collaboration and offer concepts, case studies, guidelines and instruments. The following topics will be discussed:

- Types and applications of interorganizational cooperation;
- Dynamics of the (cooperative) relationship between independent organizations;
- Conditions for success in interorganizational cooperation and networks: defining a compelling business case, implementing specific principles and ways of organizing of steering, setting up coordinating mechanisms, improving performance processes across organizational boundaries, designing interorganizational teamwork, handling the driving (and blocking) role of key individuals;
- Diagnosing and improving collaborative capabilities of partnering organization;
- The role of consulting and consultants in helping cooperation and networks

Format: Two sessions of 90 minutes each (participants are required to attend both sessions)