



Volume 18 • Number 2 • Summer 2011



*Celebrating variety,
diversity and change*

Photograph by Chris Griev. All Rights Reserved.

Journal of the
**Association for Management Education and
Development**



amed

developing people
developing organisations



Celebrating variety, diversity and change

© AMED 2011. ISSN 2042 – 9797. Copyright of this e-Organisations and People journal remains jointly with The Association for Management Education and Development and with the author(s). However, you may freely print or download articles to a local hard disk, provided they are for your personal and non-commercial use only. Please ensure that you acknowledge the original source in full using the following words 'This article first appeared in e-Organisations and People Vol 18 No 2, Summer 2011 and is reproduced by kind permission of AMED www.amed.org.uk'.

For permission to reproduce article(s) from this journal more widely, please contact the AMED Office amedoffice@amed.org.uk
UK Tel: 0300 365 1247

The views expressed in this journal by both editorial staff and contributors are not those of AMED or any of the organisations represented by the editors, but reflect the opinions of the individual authors only.



Celebrating variety, diversity and change	1
<i>Chris Grieve, guest editor writes</i>	
Editorial Summary and Introduction to our authors and articles	
Has Organisational Development Failed?	6
<i>Martin Saville and James Traeger</i>	
A polemic urging developers to recapture something essential in our practice of OD	
Building an Action Learning capability from scratch	14
<i>Anne Grove</i>	
Exploring the benefits and shadow side of a leadership development tool	
Creating and leading lasting change	21
<i>Chris Grieve</i>	
Chris reviews 'Leadership for Sustainability' a new book edited by Judi Marshall, Gill Coleman & Peter Reason	
A personal inquiry into comparisons of Gestalt coaching and therapy	24
<i>Paul Barber</i>	
The phenomenon of coaching and therapy as a whole	
Sell your cleverness and buy bewilderment	32
<i>Julie Allan and Kirstin Irving</i>	
Inquiries and poetical explorations into ambiguity and working with difference	



Polarity Management:	40
<i>Jo Gage</i>	
Working with the inevitable tensions of everyday choices in organisations	
The Change Agent and Conflict: Building Our Capacity	50
<i>Suzanne Penn</i>	
Strengthening our abilities so we can work more effectively with difference, polarity or conflict	
Tricia Lustig is a simplifier	58
<i>Interviewed by David McAra</i>	
Making AMED and e-O&P relevant for current and future practitioners	
Trailers and Flyers	61
<i>We cannot afford to be bystanders: Bruce Nixon, introduces his new book</i>	
<i>AMED Writers' Group - Friday 17 June: Making the invisible visible: narrative-based evaluation with Alison Donaldson</i>	
<i>Spring 2011 e-O&P Workshop Tuesday 21 June Lessons from the Battlefield: an e-O&P Event</i>	
<i>Write for e-O&P Winter 2011! Invitation to contributors with a story to tell about Organisation Development</i>	
<i>Please help us! e-O&P is looking to expand its circle of guest editors, contributors, and critical friends.</i>	
<i>AMED Writers' Group: Your invitation to come along</i>	

Celebrating variety, diversity and change

Chris Grieve, guest editor writes ...



I like to think of myself as an optimist.

Like the old joke goes:

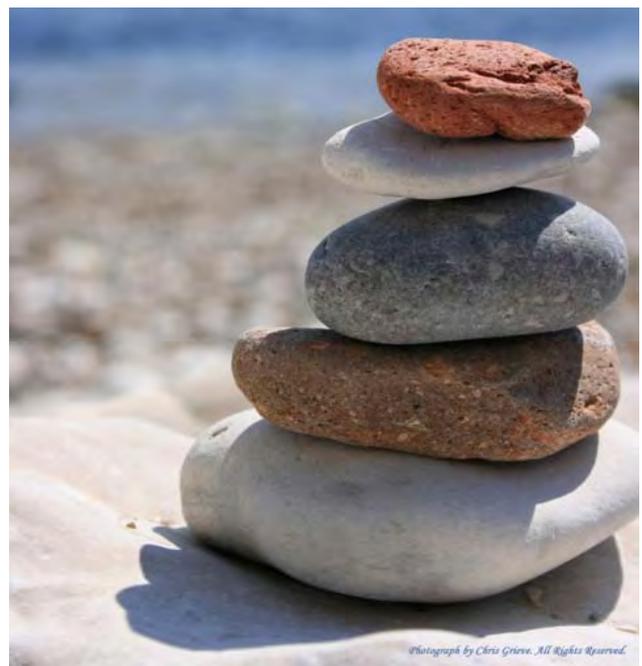
Q: How do you recognise an optimist?

A: She's the bouncy one, who on a country ramble steps ankle deep in horse manure, claps her hands together and cries brightly "Oh look, ponies!"

When searching for inspiration for a theme connecting the selection of articles in this issue of e-Organisations and People into a coherent narrative which expresses something profound to you, I found myself reflecting on the nature of optimism. I wonder why optimism seems to be relegated to the realms of naïveté and cliché, especially in the current economic climate. Many rationalists among us might ask: what's there to

feel positive about? For me optimism emerges spontaneously, carrying with it its own energy, one I find easier to tap into as the seasons change – which for some may scream of another cliché. As I write, the calendar tells me that tomorrow is technically the first day of summer. The sun is shining again, as it has in south east England for most of April and May, beaming bright energy down on a flourishing landscape full of the activities of late spring and holding promise for the summer to come. I am reminded of a brief visit last

summer to Dorset when the dazzling sunlight made the ocean dance and glimmer, infusing me with joyful optimism. I built a small cairn of stones by the sea. I had choices when creating this tiny pile: I could have chosen only the smooth, virtually perfect white stones; or just the grey granite mottled with flecks of quartz and other minerals; or the brownie-orange sandstones, pitted and porous. Creating a tower of uniform colour and almost unblemished texture may have manifested an inner yearning for stability, or a wish for zen-like balance, beauty and symmetry. As you see, I did not choose a specific type of stone. Instead I instinctively chose different colours, textures and the imperfect. I was especially attracted to the top stone which appeared to me as if it had had a bite taken out of it.



Photograph by Chris Grieve. All Rights Reserved.

Sitting now in my London home-office, reflecting on this Summer's issue of e-O&P my choices then resonate with the collection of articles presented now: they express and celebrate the essence of variety, diversity and change; and they encourage us to work with and on our and others' imperfections and to embrace the challenges these present.

Even so, my cairn's form is borrowed from Zen principles, and as such the image and memory of its creation do symbolise for me a quest for clarity and renewal through reflection. Its shape and appearance emerged in the moments of its creation, but it represents the result of thoughtful reflection and the remaking of a familiar form in my unique way. So do the articles in this edition: each author writes the results of their reflective practice, sometimes as pragmatic, even prosaic action, or poetic and lyrical insight, or even as polemic. Each in their own way sharing with other practitioners their discoveries and the lessons they learned about our collective art and science of educating and developing people in organisations. Thus remaking familiar forms in unique ways. Each in their own way simply getting on with the business we are in, rather than giving in to the negative forces that seem to bombard our sensibilities in these 'tough times'. For me, the power emerges from their accessible, practical findings, and I find myself feeling optimistic in the face of their tacit acknowledgement that while this work we choose is challenging, has a shadow side and there is much to do and learn, it is actually doable and learnable, and enriching, enabling and yes, energising.

This season's authors represent the range of practitioners who inhabit the management education and development sphere: independent practitioners, like me, moving between clients, sectors and industries; in-house practitioners, working in organisations to affect people and bring about change within complex systems of which they are a part; practitioner-researchers, working as consultants, educators and researchers, practicing the art and science of developing others, researching topics with other practitioners and shedding light on their discoveries for others to encounter, digest, critique, and reflect upon; and finally, those who straddle multiple worlds. Like the stones in the cairn, each is unique. They take on some challenging topics, but like in summers past and the summer to come, I am left with a lingering sense of optimism: this work brings vital, life-giving energy to people in organisations and the more we share it with each other the more diverse and useful we become.

Each article is described below to pique your interest. A link is provided in each synopsis to enable you to go directly to the article(s) of your choice to download, print or read on-screen. I hope you learn something new, or gain a new perspective, or glean an innovative approach to an old dilemma, or simply enjoy reading about vital work performed by other reflective practitioners in our field and the insights they have gained from their endeavours. This summer, let us celebrate variety, diversity and change.

Has organisational development failed?

MARTIN SAVILLE AND JAMES TRAEGER

A polemic urging developers to recapture something essential in our practice of OD

The authors are experienced practitioners and teachers of leadership and organisational development. In their article they wonder, in the light of the complex and highly political challenges of everyday contexts, if they and the organisational development (OD) community generally are failing organisations and their people by being too timid in the application of core values and practices that make OD distinct. They test

fellow practitioners by asking: how can we recover, in practice, that spirit of challenge manifested by the pioneers of OD? They challenge us to expand our views and consider the application of wisdom and diversity in our practice, as well as developing our own agency or instrumentality as practitioners through reflective practice.

Building an Action Learning capability from scratch

ANNE GROVE

Exploring the benefits and shadow side of a leadership development tool

Anne's perspective as an internal OD practitioner in the private sector brings pragmatic and refreshingly honest insight into the challenges posed by introducing a new tool for leadership development into her organisation. Action Learning is a well-respected tool for leadership development. Anne's paper reflects on her personal experience of introducing this methodology into a medium-sized organisation without the advantages of a pre-existing structure, already experienced set advisors or big budgets with which to gain access to consultancy services. The reflections and comments of some participants, set advisors and the programme sponsor are interspersed throughout the text to illustrate the programme's benefits, some aspects of the programme that did not work so well or as expected, thus exploring the shadow side of the programme, and some of the lessons learned.

Creating and leading lasting change – taking action in the field...

CHRIS GRIEVE

I review a new book by Judi Marshall, Gill Coleman and Peter Reason (Editors) called 'Leadership for sustainability: an action research approach'

For fourteen years the University of Bath School of Management ran an MSc in Responsibility and Business Practice. In this fascinating book, the editors recount the context, philosophical underpinnings and general structure of the practical learning programme, then present twenty-nine stories by MSc graduates. Each story communicates the essence of the challenges the narrator faced and, either tacitly or explicitly, the courage they summoned in order to question the status quo (including themselves) and attempt to lead or influence social or environmental change in mainstream business or society. The book finishes with key themes for leadership emerging from the editors' reflections on nearly a decade and a half of running the MSc. In this review I explore the book in more depth and report back upon what you, as developers, might gain from reading it.

A personal inquiry into comparisons of Gestalt coaching and therapy

PAUL BARBER

The phenomenon of coaching and therapy as a whole

Paul began developing his paper for this issue of e-O&P as a series of reflections upon how the natures of coaching and therapy might be different. As respondents and a few of his colleagues became interested, Paul subsequently interviewed them as co-researchers. What eventually emerges from their discourse is an heuristic inquiry into his practice as a Gestalt coach and therapist. Paul integrates his findings to capture the phenomenon of coaching and therapy as a whole. Paul demonstrates in his article some of the reflective research practices he explores and writes about in his book 'Becoming a Practitioner Researcher: A Gestalt Approach to Holistic Inquiry'.

Sell your cleverness and buy bewilderment

JULIE ALLAN AND KIRSTIN IRVING

Inquiries and poetical explorations into ambiguity and working with difference

Working with change in organisations raises challenges of many sorts and among them is the perennial conversation about the relationship between structure and certainties of various types, and emergence or uncertainties. What the authors suggest they probably mean by this is the relationship people have with their understanding of these concepts and their experiences of change. Pragmatically there is a need to work with different preferences and tolerances, and their position as consultants is to do so. This article explores Julie's and Kirstin's experience of bringing this inquiry in the form of a dilemma before an audience of fellow practitioners and the authors' subsequent responses.

Polarity Management – a practical tool for improving cross-team working

JO GAGE

Working with the inevitable tensions of everyday choices in organisations

Direct from the desk of another internal OD practitioner, this time working within the third sector, Jo's article explores the challenge of working across organisational boundaries and demonstrates how polarity management might be of use to the OD practitioner. After explaining the basic concept of polarity management, Jo suggests specific actions for practitioners. She articulates particular areas of focus, including gathering momentum to act, creating a shared understanding of the situation and encouraging appreciation of difference. Techniques for gaining the benefits from the poles within polarity management are discussed, alongside the need for developing skills in decision-making.

The change agent and conflict: building our capacity

SUZANNE PENN

Strengthening our abilities so we can work more effectively with difference, polarity or conflict

As a skilled independent practitioner with a rich history of facilitating the development of people and organisations and a published author, Suzanne looks at the relationship between change and conflict. In her article she emphasises how important it is for change agents to be able, not to just smooth over conflict, but to encourage it in productive ways. Suzanne's suggested starting point for us all as practitioners who seek to develop the capacity to work with conflict is to develop our own self-awareness, self-esteem and resilience in order to be able to handle relationships with more empathy and flexibility.

Tricia Lustig – a simplifier

DAVID MCARA

Making AMED and e-O&P relevant for current and future practitioners

David interviews Patricia Lustig, a member of AMED for 22 years, past Council member and former editor of O&P. Tricia shares with David her reminiscences and insights about her involvement over the last two decades in AMED and where we find ourselves now. She offers readers her perspective about the future of AMED and how to keep this journal relevant for practitioners beyond the current economic downturn and to make a contribution that enables people and organisations to thrive.

Advertisements

BRUCE NIXON – A BETTER WORLD IS POSSIBLE

Bruce promotes his forthcoming free book and invites you to download an advance copy, read it and spread the word about making the world a better place.

ALISON DONALDSON – MAKING THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE

AMED's Writers' Group on 17 June 2011 features Alison Donaldson who, along with co-authors Elizabeth Lank and Jane Maher have just had their book published (available on Amazon): '*Communities of Influence: improving healthcare through conversations and connections*'.

About the Editor

Chris Grieve is an independent executive coach, organisational and sustainable development consultant. She established Meridian Prime six years ago. Since then, Chris has coached CEOs and executives in environmental, humanitarian, entrepreneurial and consulting organisations. She consults for organisations and teams on strategy, leadership development, group dynamics and learning and development programmes; and facilitates strategic retreats, bespoke training and organisational development interventions. She has presented keynote speeches to international audiences numbering in their hundreds, as well as more intimate groups.

She is passionate about making a difference to people and planet. To this end, Chris has worked beside world leaders in science, business, government and with environmental activists and change agents in the field of marine conservation and sustainable fisheries. She consults and researches environmental impact and sustainable development policy solutions, and facilitates groups environmental decision-making.

Chris is committed to her own development. In early 2011 she completed an MSc in People and Organisational Development at the Roffey Park Institute (affiliated with University of Sussex). Her dissertation was a piece of autoethnographic action research focusing on the solo practitioner of OD and how one's identity and instrumentality can help or hinder the growth of an independent OD practice.

Email contact: chris@meridianprime.co.uk

Website: www.meridianprime.co.uk

Cover & title images

Summer stones in Dorset by Chris Grieve, 2010

Acknowledgements

This journal does not arrive without careful nurturing from a dedicated band of people. I am grateful to David McAra for his leadership to produce a smart, professionally constructed journal. I am grateful to e-O&P lead editors: Bob McKenzie, Deb Booth and David McAra for their unswerving encouragement in my first solo effort as Guest Editor. It was deeply enabling knowing you were in the background should I need anything. I experienced your reassuring presence in glum moments when I felt there might be no journal this quarter. I thank those of you who acted as critical friends to authors and potential authors for this issue: Ellen Lamparter, Jeff Matthews and Michael Walton. I especially thank the authors for providing stimulating reading and for accepting and acting upon my editorial remarks with good grace and even enthusiasm!