

Organisational development in times of Corona

Change is only brought about through active action.

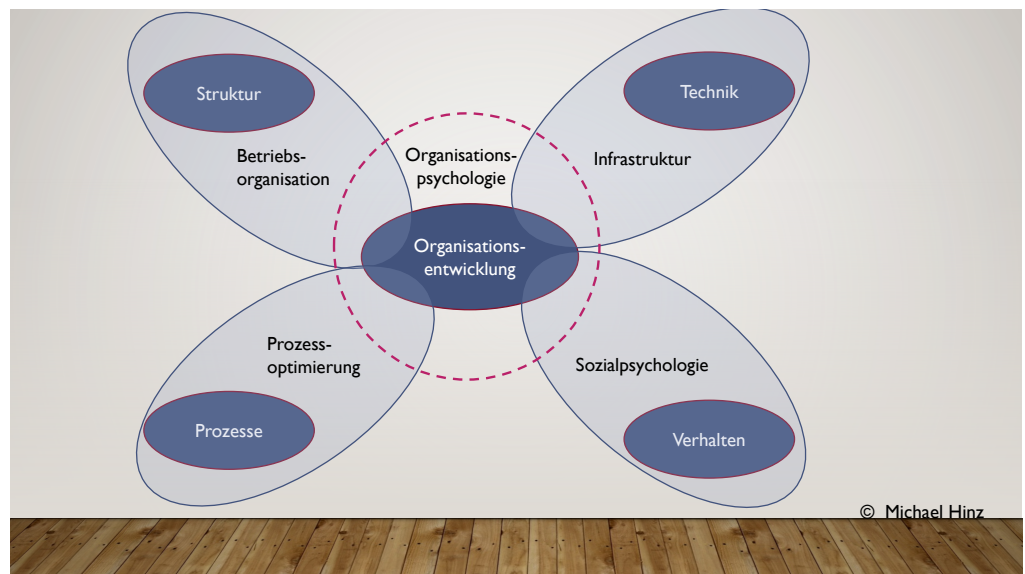
(Dalei Lama)

Why organisational development should be used right now as an active means of surviving times of crisis. Situations that are stressful for those affected, cause anxiety or give them time to reflect on previous behaviour often lead to a rethink of their own behaviour.

What is organisational development?

Organisational development is the adaptation of operational and personal behaviour based on organisational, social and behavioural psychology.

Don't worry, this will not be a treatise on the psychological foundations of organisational development. Rather, the aim is to show that it is a very serious and scientifically sound set of tools for achieving lasting process changes in operational procedures that are accepted by those involved.



With regard to the current labour situation in many companies, it is important not to give up due to the coronavirus-related restrictions and the resulting economic restrictions.

Rather, it is important right now to take up process adjustments and initiate sustainable changes.

For this change to work, it is necessary to take into account the fears and concerns of employees, the company and the environment (sales markets, customers, suppliers).

Which behavioural guides should be observed?

In simple terms, the actors can be divided into three groups whose different basic forms of behaviour must be taken into account in a new operational process model.

This very simplified basic behaviour influences the acceptance of change, the willingness to consume and the ability to support adjustments in the long term.

- **The security lovers**

This group reduces all activity to a minimum. It withdraws from the market as far as possible and tries to preserve existing resources for as long as possible by doing without.

This group is very important for the long-term success of changes, but is usually difficult to convince at first.

- **The optimists**

This group is aware of the existing framework conditions, but firmly believes that normalisation will occur after a relatively short time. This group only makes sacrifices where the current conditions demand it.

This group is an important multiplier in the initial phase of change, as this group has a basic attitude of living permanent change relatively fearlessly.

- **The comrades-in-arms**

This group (the majority) adapts to the respective opinion leaders. Fears and hopes are very strongly linked to the prevailing opinion and the nature (behaviour) of the opinion leaders. If it is possible to reach a consensus within the group (depending on the presence of the aforementioned groups), changes can be successful in the very short term.

This group is particularly important with regard to sales markets and production quality. Extrinsic motivation (incentives such as discounts, bonuses, awards) can reinforce behaviour here.

Operational process changes, however extensive they may be, are therefore not only influenced by the operational set-up and the adaptation of structure (operational organisation) or infrastructure (technology). The behaviour (social psychology) of those involved (employees, suppliers, customers) in terms of basic behaviour (group behaviour) and individual behaviour also has a significant influence on the success of change processes (process optimisation).

All components are part of an organisational psychology approach and therefore core elements of successful organisational development.

How is the pandemic affecting our business activities?

Currently, social and personal actions are still characterised by risk minimisation (SHUT DOWN). This results in significant economic restrictions, which lead to questioning both the economic and personal situation.

However, for the first time in our prosperous social history of the last 70 years, not only is there an economically justified risk scenario (analogous to the financial crisis) that influences our behaviour, but also an existential risk scenario (personal impact of the virus) that we have never experienced before.

This combination is frightening, although the economic risk is being mitigated in Germany by the very quickly implemented measures, the combination of these two risk aspects is a paralysing factor.

Companies are currently mainly thinking about the economic continuity of the company in the coming months and the players in the companies (employees) are thinking about keeping their jobs.

This short-term thinking is important and correct, but it must not overshadow strategic thinking about the long-term orientation of the company and thus the preservation of jobs.

This makes it all the more important to develop scenarios now, with the company's more optimistic resources, as to how markets can be regained in the context of an imminent moderate opening of the restrictions due to the corona measures.

It can be assumed that there will be businesses that will not survive the current situation in the medium and long term. This is certainly due to the effects of the pandemic, but realistically, in many cases it is also due to a lack of previous or current willingness to initiate change.

There is no magic formula for success, economic prosperity and long-term satisfaction, but by taking a targeted approach to the current situation, it is possible to increase the likelihood of not being one of those whose livelihoods are affected.

In my opinion, the tools contained in this willingness to adapt and optimise will enable us to meet upcoming national and global requirements and make positive use of them in the long term.

The willingness to change and the desire to involve the stakeholders in the organisational development process with all their fears and abilities, in line with the group classification outlined above, is the chance to defy the challenges of the coming months.

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