Dialogic Organization Development

The Theory and Practice of Transformational Change

Dialogic Organization Development is a compelling alternative to the classical action research approach to planned change. Organizations are seen as fluid, socially constructed realities that are continuously created through conversations and images—change happens when those conversations and images change. Leaders and consultants can help foster, support, or accelerate the emergence of transformational possibilities by encouraging disruptions to taken-for-granted ways of thinking and acting and the use of generative images to stimulate new organizational conversations and narratives. Dialogic OD is a different mindset, but it’s also the previously unrecognized underpinning of such diverse change methods as Appreciative Inquiry, the Art of Convening, Future Search, and many more.

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About the Editors

Gervase R. Bushe is Professor of Leadership and Organization Development at the Beedie School of Business, Simon Fraser University, and is a two-time winner of the Douglas McGregor Award.

Robert J. Marshak is Distinguished Scholar in Residence at the School of Public Affairs, American University. He has received the OD Network’s Lifetime Achievement Award.

Praise for Dialogic Organizational Development

“Dialogic Organization Development could not have arrived at a better time. The assumptions underlying it and some of the goals for social change and improvement that it articulates not only build on an important legacy but reinforce those aspects of OD that will be most needed in the future.”
—Edgar H. Schein, Professor Emeritus, MIT

“The Bushe-Marshak collaboration, together with an amazing collection of other leaders in the field, has challenged much in our past yet somehow also achieved a joyous homecoming to what matters most in OD—the democratic, dialogic, jointly created design of the fully human organization.”
—David Cooperrider, Fairmount-David L. Cooperrider Professor of Appreciative Inquiry, Case Western Reserve University

“The wisdom and experience captured between the covers of this book is truly impressive and the authors bring the insights of our age to bear on the questions at hand with a useful and powerful effect. Definitely a good read.”
—Harrison Owen, author of Open Space Technology

“What Bushe and Marshak have compiled is nothing short of groundbreaking and a critical contribution to the evolution of OD theory and practice. The book is intended for OD graduate programs, but from my point of view it should be recommended reading for all OD practitioners.”
—Judith Katz, Executive VP, Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group

“Dialogic Organization Development takes our field into exciting new territory, rich with possibility for enlivening organizations and communities through being able to change the conversation, and thus, change the future.”
—Juanita Brown, coauthor and creator, The World Café

“In this outstanding collection, one gets a clear sense that ‘dialogic’ is bringing OD into the new, contemporary contexts, so real today, and so different from the contexts in which foundational OD was developed. This is an essential work for graduate OD education and advanced understanding of the evolving field.”
—David W. Jamieson, Professor of Organizational Learning, College of Education, University of St Thomas

“Gervase Bushe and Bob Marshak offer a comprehensive approach to organizational change that reinvigorates our conversation about OD and helps us re-imagine the theories and approaches that inform our consulting practices. This is a valuable resource for both graduate OD courses and OD practitioners.”
—John Vogelsang, Editor-in-Chief, OD Practitioner