

OB 602 Fall Semester

Consulting Skills and Team Building Processes

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Change is hard. Consulting can be full of conflicts and power struggles. One explanation: “People do not change easily or all at once. Most of us need a chance to try out new ways and to become familiar with new procedures.” So said Bill Dyer, founder of the Department of Org Behavior at BYU, great friend and mentor who helped establish the OB and OD fields, as well as become a consultant extraordinaire. I worked with Bill on several projects including our doing consulting work with a big U.S. mining company in the Andes of Chile. I learned a lot from Bill, and after he retired I convinced him to join the board of trustees of an NGO I’d established to create jobs for poor people in the Philippines. Known as the Philippines Enterprise Development Foundation, we served thousands of impoverished families. Bill gave us great insight in how to grow and improve our NGO.

Introduction:

This course is a practicum in organizational consulting and team building. We will learn such things as diagnosis and the consultant in facilitating the process of corporate change. The class is designed to assist participants in acquiring knowledge, understanding and experience in analyzing change needs, planning change strategies, and using specific consulting interventions.

The assumption behind the class design is that any facilitator of change (outside consultant, internal staff member, line manager) needs skills and knowledge about: organizations as technical, political, and cultural systems, overcoming resistance to change, approaches to conducting diagnoses of organizations, intervention and consulting tools, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation capabilities.

The course will be built upon both intellectual and experiential models of learning. There will be a variety of activities during class, both individually and within groups. OB 602 is organized around paradigms and theories of change at different levels, as well as the application of conceptual learnings and use of consulting interventions in corporations and nonprofits as well.

Key Concepts:

Each week, we will discuss several key topics in consulting, team building, and managing change. For the teams material, we will draw on Bill’s book *Team Building: Proven Strategies for Improving Team Performance*, one of the OD series by Addison-Wesley, Pub.

A second book is by myself and Dr. Christopher Meek, also in the Addison-Wesley OD Series: *Creating Labor-Management Partnerships*, a volume that reveals how effective consulting can improve union-management relationships and form an effective and positive system of collaboration.

Finally, there will be selected readings from Harvey & Brown: *An Experiential Approach to Organization Development*. Additional readings, articles, etc. will be accessible on blackboard for students to read ahead of class.

“The price of anything is the amount of life you exchange for it.”
– Henry David Thoreau, philosopher/change agent

Application:

Application is the ultimate test of effective consulting and cases can be useful methods for applying concepts. We will use several cases and simulations in class to understand the concepts and issues being discussed. These will include traditional written cases, videos, and “real” consulting projects. Each group in the class will do original work with a client organization. Demonstrations of specific organizational development interventions will be applied in class in order to maximize the learning and utilization of tools and methods.

Philosophy of Teaching:

My courses are always designed to offer alternative views, not simply the “party line,” or the established theories that the majority of managers, or even academics may hold dear. For some students it is troubling to read, hear, or have to consider multiple answers, or differing perspectives. But my assumption is that *universities are to serve as the marketplace of ideas, that conceptual paradigms are to be scrutinized and analyzed, not merely canonized.* Also, I teach from my personal experiences, real-world consulting with some of the largest, most powerful corporations in the world. Other professors who lack such experience, have never made a living as a consultant, or who have never managed an organization or served on a corporate board, may prefer the textbook answer, the Harvard case notes, and the hypothetical. But not in this class.

Most professors would admit that if they had the opportunity, their teaching would be enriched by hands-on consulting down in the trenches where the real action is. In my classes, students are often bewildered by the smelly, dirty realities of trying to do deep change. Some are repelled by the high likelihood of failed change efforts or the absolute necessity of being tough-minded. Some opt for the comforts of naiveté rather than being rejected, facing ethical dilemmas, and so on. These individuals prefer, instead, the luxury of armchair speculation and simplistic answers. For them the ease of a hypothetical solution is much better to swallow than facing cold, hard realities—those of resistance, conflict, and the politics needed to achieve substantive organizational transformation.

Hence, *OB 602 is an attempt to expand student minds, not to narrow them; to generate and engage in conceptual processes, not passive ones; to foster debate and critical learning, not a confirmation of one’s traditional ideas and/or biases.* My pedagogical approach emphasizes divergent thinking, rather than convergent. My hope is more than simply helping students memorize “*the answers.*” Instead, we need to focus on the nature of the problems, get at their root causes, and then move beyond the paralysis of analysis that afflicts many OD programs to achieve significant change—system wide shifts in power structures that alter the balance of who gets what in corporate life today. Down through history we have built these huge bureaucratic systems, and now we can humanize them. The results will not only lead to higher profits and greater productivity for the firm, but a better quality of life for workers, managers, and society as a whole.

Learning Outcomes:

For OB 602, learning outcomes and their assessment are as follows:

1. Remembering & Understanding: Students will show evidence of their grasp of change concepts and cases by successfully answering occasional pop quizzes and brief written tests at the beginning of class which inquire about the assigned readings for the day. These may be supplemented by attending lectures as independent learning activities and drafting short reports and critiques (Sub-total of 25 points possible).
2. Explaining & Summarizing: Students will be able to effectively communicate various consulting concepts, team building tools and methods about each day’s readings, showing evidence they understand and can

articulate and evaluate core principles in the classroom through the quantity and quality of their participation. Evidence of this will be assessed by not only the professor, but their peers, as well, through written evaluations at the end of the course (Ongoing assessment of 25 points maximum).

3. Justifying & Communicating Learning: At the end of the semester, there will be a final comprehensive exam that will include objective questions from the text, short essay questions, and brief case analyses. It will test one's ability to justify and communicate what has been learned. It will require students to integrate consulting information covered throughout the course and apply change and team building concepts and methodology to various organization problems. As a synthesis of everything learned, each student will be expected to answer clearly and coherently in addressing the complexities of doing change management (In class exam during the officially scheduled period of Monday, April 18 in room #174 TNRB from 11:00 AM-1:30 PM @ 100 points possible).

4. Creating & Exploring: Students will search for and draft a biographical paper which covers the life and legacy of a recognized consultant who has successfully changed organizations. This learning outcome will show evidence of one's ability to search for valid sources, identify key questions about change practices, develop and evaluate criteria for what makes a good consultant, and conduct a live interview, all of which will become part of the written product to be drafted and turned in for grading (Due Wednesday March 23 for 75 points max).

5. Organizational Designing & Applying: Students will individually or as a team (2-3 people) utilize core principles of consulting to design a strategy with an organization in need of change. This will be the major evidence for demonstrating students' capacity to practice what they study by taking action. It will show how OD tools such as team building and other ideas have been critically examined, as well as how they have been assessed for their feasibility through practical applications. Evidence of building a logical approach and strong writing skills will be required. This learning outcome will be a synthesis of the semester's experience. This will be not only be a written deliverable, but an oral presentation to one's peers in which projects are made public and class criticisms are shared through feedback after each presentation. Further adjustments may be needed, based on class members and the professor's reactions. As a summation of learnings about consulting, the student will be expected to critique oneself and others' final products, justify the feasibility of their change plan in terms of implementation, as well as make a timeline for achieving practical results in future months beyond the semester. Through this learning process, individuals will demonstrate how change methods can be used to improve an actual organization, and show the power of real-world learning through their new hands-on applications (For submission April 6 or preferably earlier with 75 points possible).

Assessment of total points possible for grading all learning outcomes is 300 points.

Class Dynamics:

OB 602 demands significant commitment from students because it will challenge participants in ways to which they may not be accustomed. The course structure will somewhat open and fluid, as opposed to many Marriott courses in which everything is clearly spelled out, every detail concrete. Instead, you are accountable to make sense out of this experience, cope with ambiguity, and expand your capabilities as necessary. Core expectations include the following:

Integrity – Careful adherence to the Honor Code in your personal and academic life. Each member of the BYU community ought to reference the Honor Code in determining what constitutes moral/ethic behavior. There is an assumption on my part that students will honor the commitment they have made to live an ethical life. The Code defines the standards of personal honesty and integrity in one's role as a student or faculty member at BYU. For this class I want to emphasize several specifics: 1) that there is no deception in your representation of who you are and what you do; 2) that other students are treated appropriately regardless of race, gender, nationality or religion; 3) that our interaction will operate from a foundation of honesty, regardless of whether people agree with another's point of view or not.

Citizenship – Instead of being a pawn in a narrowly defined course, your responsibility will be to participate in organizing our classroom culture for learning. This means education is your responsibility, not the professor’s. Be willing to experiment, to try new things, to take risks. Hopefully, you will stretch your thinking and applying of OD processes. In the end your role is to develop new skills for processing information and applying one’s learning in creative ways. In short, the task is that of becoming a change agent.

Participation – Attending all class sessions and being accountable for readings, presentations and the acquisitions of practical skills. Hopefully we can create an atmosphere for the free exchange of ideas, not just lectures. Do not be reluctant to speak out. If students push themselves to be mentally engaged, the experience will be more rewarding for all. This does not preclude disagreement or argument with the ideas or opinions of others. Indeed, a healthy intellectual environment necessitates debate and differing views. Multiple voices are needed and we should each work hard to enhance the participation of others, even as we take issue with their position. All of us at BYU need to better learn to discuss and confront in fun and healthy exchanges rather than simply conform.

Purposes – BYU’s mission is “to assist individuals in their quest for perfection and eternal life” in a “setting where a commitment to excellence is expected and the full realization of human potential is pursued.” In doing this effectively we will strengthen our “influence in a world we wish to improve.” By learning new skills, integrating gospel principles with the best theories of social science, we will expand our capacities for lifelong service to others.

“A consultant is any ordinary person more than fifty miles from home.” - Popular Saying (especially by critics)

Synopsis of Requirements:

	<u>Points</u>
1. CLASSROOM PARTICIPATION (On-going) Students will be evaluated with respect to quality and quantity of verbal contributions, team contributions, etc.	25 pts
2. CONSULTANT BIO./OD METHODS (Due Wed. March 23) Student dyads of 2 will draft an 8 page paper on a current leading consultant & one’s model of change/consulting. What’s her/his theory of action research? Books? Cases? Other publications? Assumptions? Values? Practice? Reputation? Clients? Impacts?	75 pts.
3. TEAM CONSULTING PROJECT (Due Wednesday April 6) Each team will work with a client as an consulting action learning project. The task is to diagnose organizational problems and recommend actions/interventions to improve the situation. Interviews or other sources of data and recommendations will be used in preparing a written consulting report and meeting with the client. In-class presentations will occur beginning April 6, 2010.	75 pts
4. IN-CLASS QUIZZES (On-going) There will be an occasional pop quiz on the day’s assigned	25 pts.

	reading to ensure that everyone has read the material, to encourage students to keep up on key concepts and methods, and thereby enjoy better class discussions.	
5.	FINAL IN-CLASS EXAM (Monday, April 18: 11:00 -1:30) The final comprehensive exam will include objective questions from the text, short essay questions, and brief case analyses. It will test one's ability to integrate consulting information covered throughout the course and apply OD concepts and methodology to various organization problems.	100 pts.
	TOTAL POSSIBLE	300 points

“There is nothing as practical as a good theory.” - Kurt Lewin

OB 602: Class Schedule and Reading Assignments:

Dates	Assignments	Topics
January 05	Class Start-up/Welcome	Course Overview
January 10	OD Text: Chapter 1	Introduction to Organizational Development
January 12	Text: Chapter 2	Organizational Renewal and Change
January 17	<i>MLK, Jr. Day (no class)</i>	<i>Consider Rev. King's Social Change Tactics</i>
January 19	Woodworth: Blackboard Readings	Consultant Success & Failure
January 24	Blackboard Readings	Consulting Critiques
January 26	Text: Chapter 3	Organizational Culture & Change
January 31	Text: Chapter 4	Consulting Roles & Styles
February 02	Text: Chapter 5 & 6	Diagnostic Processes, Resistance to Change
February 07	Dyer: <i>Team building</i> book I	Cases/Tools I
February 09	Dyer: Team building II	Team Interventions Cases II
February 14	Dyer: Team building III	Tools III
February 16	Text: Chapter 7	Process Interventions
February 21	Holiday	Enjoy a break
February 22	Blackboard Readings	Consulting
February 23	Text: Chapter 8	OD Intervention Strategies
February 28	Blackboard Readings	Consulting Case
March 02	Text: Chapter 9, 10, 11	Employee Involvement Methodologies
March 07	Text: Chapter 12, 13	Goal Setting, Continuous Improvement
March 09	Blackboard Readings	Consulting Case
March 14	Blackboard Readings	Consulting Tools
March 16	Text: Chapter 14, 15	High Performance/ High Commitment
March 21	Woodworth/Meek: <i>Labor Mgt.</i>	Building Bridges/Understanding/Getting Started
March 23	Labor Mgt. Collaboration	Joint Problem Solving; <i>Consultant Bios Due</i>
March 28	Labor Mgt. Collaboration	A New Collective Bargaining Model
March 30	Labor Mgt. Collaboration	Partnerships for Organizational Transformation
April 04	Labor Mgt. Collaboration	Nuts and Bolts of Implementation
April 06	<i>Consulting Methodologies (a)</i>	In-Class PPT Presentations <i>All Team Written Consulting Projects Due</i>

April 11	<i>Consulting Methodologies (b)</i>	In-Class PPT Presentations
April 13	Blackboard Readings	Course Wrap-Up/Now Do Class Evaluations
April 18	<i>In-Class Final Exam / Monday</i>	<i>11:00 AM -1:30 PM / Room 174 TNRB</i>

“My greatest strength as a consultant is to be ignorant and ask a few questions.” - Peter Drucker