

PracticingOD

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Welcome to *Practicing OD*, a collection of short articles (900–1200 words) on useful ideas, lessons learned, and practical suggestions for managing the day-to-day challenges of doing OD. We welcome brief case studies; guidelines and tips for applying proven or cutting-edge methods, principles, processes, practices, interventions, and tools; and thought-provoking essays on practice-related challenges, questions that emerged from a client engagement, or new trends and technologies that will influence the practice of OD.

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Include your name, phone number, and email address. If your article is accepted for publication, you will be notified via email. We look forward to hearing from you.

Submission Guidelines

- » Articles should be practical and short (*900–1200 words; 3–4 pages single-spaced*)
 - Write in your own (first-person) voice using simple, direct, conversational language.
 - Focus on **what** you are discussing, **how** it works, or can be used, and **why** it works (what you believe or how theory supports it).
 - Use bulleted lists and short sections with subheads to make it easier to read.
 - Include everything in the text. No sidebars. No or very limited graphics.
 - Do not use footnotes or citations if at all possible. Citations, if essential, should be included in the text with a short list of references at the end of the article.
- » Articles can be written from various perspectives, including but not limited to:
 - Brief case studies that highlight useful concepts, applied theories, lessons learned, and implications for future practice.
 - Guidelines and tips for applying proven or cutting-edge methods, principles, processes, practices, interventions, and tools.
 - Thought-provoking essays on practice-related challenges, questions that emerged from a client engagement, or new trends and technologies that will influence the practice of OD.
- » *Practicing OD* considers articles with original content for publication.
 - Articles considered for publication may not have been previously published elsewhere (including online in any format).
 - Articles from returning authors will be considered after one year has elapsed since publication of the previous article.
- » Include a short (*25–50 words*) author bio with your email so readers can contact you.

“Diverse, dispersed teams, if managed properly, can be effective in solving complex problems, developing new relationships with multiple firm stakeholders, executing projects, communicating, and providing innovative perspectives.”

Diverse and Dispersed

Accessing the Hidden Benefits of Your Virtual Team

By Carlos Baradello and
Rebekah Dibble

Remote working arrangements have been thrust into the mainstream by the recent global pandemic. Without question, COVID-19 has transformed workplace culture. The pandemic confronted global knowledge workers with a multitude of changes within a few weeks. It forced us to work and collaborate remotely, uncovering new opportunities for inclusion of our increasingly diverse human capital. Communications that used to be in-person with teammates, co-workers, vendors, partners, stakeholders, investors, and others are now virtual. Has this development accelerated workplace diversity? If so, what is the net impact on organizations?

The current pandemic is causing a massive global reset, during which many social behaviors and norms are changing. Old habits and routines are being replaced with new ones. Digital connectivity has brought home our work and all the meetings with various teams and workgroups. Working from home is no longer a privilege or a company perk; for many it has become the only option.

Diverse, dispersed teams, if managed properly, can be effective in solving complex problems, developing new relationships with multiple firm stakeholders, executing projects, communicating, and

providing innovative perspectives. From an OD perspective, one key opportunity presented by this development is for the role of change agent to be more broadly distributed. With the increasing ease and expertise in bringing together diverse, distributed teams, members may be tapped more frequently for their varied perspectives and participation to drive and enact meaningful change. As increased diversity is incorporated into change processes, everyone wins.

Effectively leading diverse teams is a common organizational challenge. When teams work virtually, challenges increase, as non-verbal and paraverbal communications seen in a conference room are now eliminated or reduced. Further, socioeconomic, cultural, age, and gender diversity, as well as differences in values, could lead to different interpretations of the same information, polarizing value-driven decision making and limiting participation. Savvy leaders and OD professionals can avoid the potential pitfalls of diverse teams by working to mitigate the loss of trust, which often limits full engagement of team members.

While virtual teamwork involves risks and challenges, working remotely may also enable us to unlock potential productivity

gains. Diverse teams can bring their performance to new heights, something that may be difficult to achieve in the same physical space. For example, virtual communication may reduce the transmission of status cues and characteristics (e.g., hierarchical positions, organizational tenure, and socioeconomic status). This may occur either by blocking or weakening status information or weakening of norms by which expectations around status get translated into participation-limiting behaviors. In turn, this may divert attention from status cues and allow team members to focus on

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what matters most—the diverse problem solving perspectives they bring to the table. To capitalize on these possible productivity gains, we propose six guidelines that leaders and OD practitioners might consider when guiding and facilitating interventions in diverse and dispersed teams:

1. Diversity is the point: Keep in mind that team diversity is your main asset as well as a potential challenge. It's important to value the diversity of perspectives, problem solving approaches, and skills that each virtual team member brings. A recent study by Mayer, Warr and Zhao (2017) found that fostering diversity increases innovation as measured by new product announcements, patent creation, and citations on patents, across many industries. Take time at the creation of a new team to

take stock of the unique skill sets and resources that each member brings to the team.

2. Trust is the cornerstone: Bringing to bear members' unique talents, assets, and knowledge requires vulnerability. Trust can help to bridge the functional, cultural, and geographical divisions to allow a team to access the benefits of team member diversity. Working remotely, trust is developed by the savvy leaders or OD practitioners who facilitate the system to develop norms and practices to keep agreements, be

accountable and reliable in interactions and exchanges. This creates a culture which expects members to treat each other with respect and act in the best interest of the team.

3. Create clear norms and structures for managing team meetings: Virtual teams need clear guidelines, and expectations should be spelled out in detail when casual peer feedback and body language are not available. Creating meeting agendas and action lists, identifying open and closed decisions, and coming to agreement on shared technologies are helpful. OD practitioners can guide teams in interventions such as creating team charters that can help to increase the engagement of team members during virtual meetings, as well as the psychological safety that

enables effective participation. Team charters can also ensure the creation of norms such as ensuring that everyone is heard, issuing action items and timely reminders of deadlines, and developing a predictable tempo of team meetings and deliverables. Other interventions might facilitate the creation of spaces for socialization within the larger group or dividing into subgroups or breakouts, with subsequent reports back to the larger group.

- 4. Mix and match the communication tools to be virtually inclusive:** Diverse virtual teams require the ability to draw upon multiple formats for inclusive participation, such as mediums that allow for both synchronous and asynchronous communication. Select the most appropriate communication to make it easier for everyone to contribute. Integrate multiple communication tools (e.g., Messages, WhatsApp, Slack, Zoom, e-mail, cloud repositories, etc.) to help those who may struggle to deliver or respond to in-person presentations or discussions in the virtual meeting room. Selecting the right digital media may help equalize participation in discussion and mitigate domination.
- 5. Celebrate achievements and be generous with tokens of appreciation:** To keep motivation high, consider interventions such as team evaluations, including peer assessments. Express gratitude to teams and highlight work that is well done. Consider coaching team members in areas for growth using approaches rooted in appreciative inquiry. Surprise team members with appearances from customers, clients, or higher-ranking executives at virtual celebrations.
- 6. Enable socialization mechanisms as an integral part of the meeting agenda:** COVID-19 has limited our in-person socialization opportunities. The use of the breakout features of virtual communication tools enable us to divide teams in smaller groups to address a specific challenge, solve a business problem, or take advantage of the diverse skills and experience of team members.

Promoting the use of smaller working groups can enable the construction of bridges of respect and collaboration among diverse team members while engaging a diverse cadre of potential change agents in solving critical business problems.

Adapting to the changing work environment over the last few months has taught us all a great deal about the importance of successful diverse and dispersed teams, and has helped to prepare us for the future, as many companies will continue to work remotely in the post-pandemic world. The increased prevalence of the virtual modality will enable organizations to hire employees both domestically and overseas to form the dynamic teams required to meet firms' critical business needs.

The challenges inherent in the COVID-19 crisis may enable us to become

more adept at global collaboration, and heighten the importance of successfully facilitating diverse, globally dispersed teams. Remote work is here to stay, and our experience indicates that firms will benefit by increasing their ability to capitalize on the diversity of their global virtual teams.

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“... diversity also includes *invisible* differences that cover the gamut of human experience: cognition, emotion, expression, temperament, and personality as well as vast cultural differences along national, ethnic, and class lines, among others.”

Shifting Our Focus

Discovering Deep Diversity

By Dimitra Giannakoulis

For decades, organizations in the United States have struggled with diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Many reasons account for why we've made so little traction with DEI, but one crucial factor has received little attention: workplace culture. Many organizations still operate with cultural values that lead to the exclusion of many women, people of color, immigrants, older workers, LGBTQ community members, and others from marginalized or disadvantaged groups.

To make real progress with DEI, organizations would benefit from intercultural practices and principles. Interculturalism is both a way of being that helps people of different backgrounds connect and communicate as well as an academic discipline backed by social science research. With interculturalism, we can take stock of our traditional values and enrich our perspectives to create more effective—and happier—workplaces.

What is Interculturalism?

Interculturalism is the ability to shift perspectives and adapt or create new culture. The consummate interculturalist moves

among cultures and recognizes the needs of the moment to respond to situations constructively. Knowing when to speak up, when to hold back, when to be firm and direct rather than tacit and circumspect is as much an exercise in interculturalism as it is in emotional intelligence.

Greater self-awareness and expanded notions of “diversity” come with the intercultural approach. In the United States, the word “diversity” usually evokes images of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, trans-gender, and other differences we can readily see or categorize. However, the concept of diversity also includes *invisible* differences that cover the gamut of human experience: cognition, emotion, expression, temperament, and personality as well as vast cultural differences along national, ethnic, and class lines, among others. This is what I call “deep diversity.”

In the context of work, deep diversity is about recognizing exactly how we organize ourselves, create rules and procedures, approach problems and challenges, and lead and manage people. We become aware of the behaviors, traits, skills, and abilities we admire at work.

Dominant U.S. culture typically values people who work fast and multitask. Many workplaces harbor a bias toward action, speed, efficiency, and quick wins. They favor those who are extroverted, charismatic, and funny, and seek overachievers who elevate career above all else. This is the kind of “talent” and “leadership potential” organizations tend to recognize and reward.

There’s nothing inherently wrong with these values. The problem lies elsewhere: organizations lack awareness about how culture imbued with these values compels people to conform to a narrow range of behaviors and personality types to succeed. In the U.S., those who do not come from the dominant WASP culture feel most ill at ease.

Consider the following values in your own work and life experience.

| | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Competition | Cooperation |
| Efficiency | Conscientiousness |
| Facts/data | People & relationships |
| Emotional control | Expression of emotions |
| Schedules & deadlines | Time flexibility |
| Logic & reason | Intuition & experience |

On the left are common U.S. values, and the values on the right are more common in other parts of the world and more dominant among women, immigrants, and people of color, according to cross-cultural studies, such as Hall (1981), Irvine & York (1995), Nisbett (2003), and Carr-Ruffino (2015). Learning to honor both sets of values creates a more inclusive and equitable culture. This intercultural process surfaces deep diversity, integrates values from our culture and from others, and creates space for a diverse workforce.

Interculturalism at Work

We can wake up to culture when we find ourselves in an uncomfortable setting and engage with that discomfort to learn something new. Talking with someone

and achieving a breakthrough realization, “Ah... now I understand where you’re coming from,” is an intercultural moment. To be able to do this, we cultivate a repertoire of skills throughout our lives, including, but not limited to:

- » Self-awareness of ourselves/cultures
- » Empathy
- » Knowledge of other people/cultures
- » Listening
- » Flexibility
- » Self-management
- » Curiosity
- » Humility
- » Tolerance of ambiguity

These skills (Paige, 1993; Ting-Toomey, 1999; Bennett, J. M., 2014) are universal in every setting. The best managers are intercultural without even knowing it—they bring out the best in employees by understanding and respecting each person’s different strengths, unique needs, and particular motivations. The best teams act like

intercultural teams—equally contributing and harnessing every member’s input to ultimately synergize their collective knowledge and experience. They balance task and process, planning and spontaneity, speed and quality.

How do we cultivate these abilities? As in other aspects of life, we learn experientially over time, through practice and by interacting with fellow human beings. From our earliest years, we construct our identities in relation to others. Once we immerse ourselves with those who are different from us, we can reconstitute our identities and change our attitudes and beliefs. Behaving intercultural requires a challenging deconstruction of personal identity—being curious, feeling empathy, exercising self-awareness. None of this is fast or easy, but it is durable.

A developmental approach is key. Change agents and leaders must meet people where they are. Milton Bennett’s Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

Table 1. *Examples of shaping goals customized to needs of individuals and organizations*

| Stage | Broad Goals |
|--|--|
| Denial “Of course we’d never discriminate.” | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce concepts of difference • Increase opportunities for relationship-building between those who are “different” |
| Defense “I’ve earned my way to the top.” | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge differences and similarities between people • Validate feelings and experiences across the board |
| Minimization “In the end, we’re all the same.” | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share life stories and personal histories • Encourage identification with others |
| Acceptance “Tell me more ...” | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affirm new worldviews • Maintain respect and validation of various experiences • Avoid stereotyping |
| Adaptation “We need all voices at this meeting.” | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate reform of organizational processes • Train and hone skills in dialogue, exchange, and emotional intelligence |
| Integration “Everyone’s input is in this plan.” | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normalize DEI throughout all organizational procedures, processes, and structures • Make the culture “stick” |

(1993) offers a useful framework, outlining stages of tolerance towards differences among people: *Denial, Defense, Minimization, Acceptance, Adaptation, and Integration*. Using this model as a starting point, we can shape goals customized to the needs of individuals and organizations. *Table 1* contains a few examples.

All this requires hard work, but it is worth it. This anonymous quote from a client survey sums it up: “We’ve come so far in learning to listen and value each other as human beings. My worldview has changed. . . It’s a journey, but we’re creating a wonderful place to be around here.”

Beginning the Journey

I believe most organizations fail to retain a diverse workforce because they don’t allow for diverse ways of doing the work. We grow accustomed to culture without understanding it. Overcoming unconsciousness and achieving self-awareness of our culture is a critical first step. If “know thyself” is the bedrock of personal wisdom, then “know thy culture” is the foundation for adaptive, successful, and truly diverse organizations.

Learning to value other cultures, discovering deep diversity, and embedding intercultural principles alone won’t be enough to reverse centuries of injustice, but they are the keystones for building meaningfully diverse workplaces. In conjunction with unconscious bias training, education on privilege, and equity-driven hiring and retention efforts, interculturalism lays a foundation for lasting change. With it, organizations have the tools, capacity, and wherewithal to forge an inclusive culture.

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“... challenging dominant culture in service of dismantling systems of white supremacy compels us to review everything we do and how we do it.”

The New Age of OD Heretics

By Sally Loftis

If the global pandemic has taught us anything about work, it is the vital need for agile systems and work processes. In 2020, millions of Americans have suffered pay cuts, furloughs, and even long-term unemployment. The way we work and gather has been upended. On top of the economic fallout, the US is facing a systemic racial reckoning with communities and organizations offering equity and inclusion statements.

The systems of injustice reach far and wide. Systems within organizations include marketing, internal communication, facilities, vendor management, human resources, technology, archives, financial practices, and customer relationship management. Those are just the big buckets of work at the surface. Deeper levels of system change happen in our leadership definitions, use of autonomy and flexibility, compensation philosophies, decision-making processes, and communication practices. OD practitioners can promote change at all system levels to transform the systems of injustice that surround us.

In my work as an OD practitioner, I have found organizations struggle to implement plans for anti-racist frameworks beyond building knowledge and awareness with employees. Yet equity and

inclusion efforts at a systemic change level is more than awareness. An essential way to address and confront racism and other types of oppression lies in the way organizations design and implement structures, systems, and processes. This constant and non-linear work includes individual change, team conversations, and organization design.

White Dominant Culture— The Context

At every level of our systems, dominant white culture informs structures, rules, relationships, and strategies. It is part of living in a dominant culture. White supremacy behaviors permeate every part of our work. These behaviors show up in our relationships, approaches to work, and group interactions. Therefore, challenging dominant culture in service of dismantling systems of white supremacy compels us to review everything we do and how we do it. Tema Okun notes the following characteristics of white supremacy culture (Okun, n.d.):

- » Perfectionism
- » Sense of urgency
- » Defensiveness
- » Paternalism

- » Quantity over quality
- » Worship of the written word
- » Only one right way
- » Either/or thinking
- » Power hoarding
- » Individualism
- » Objectivity
- » Progress is bigger, more
- » Right to comfort

At the **individual level**, OD practitioners are learning and showing up differently with new knowledge and awareness. If we are learning about our own implicit bias,

As organizations revise people and reward systems, OD practitioners can offer research and broader perspectives with leaders to change traditional structures and frameworks. OD practitioners build the system’s capacity to safely adopt these changes, embed equity, and adjust to the new dynamics throughout the organization.

awareness will enter and change us when we seek knowledge from and relationships with people who have different lived experiences. That’s the power of finding resonance with humanity. We notice how we affect our relationships and teams, such as power structures, positions of privilege, and dominant decision-making processes. Reflective listening practices become especially important to OD practitioners as they work with client systems. As we change with this work, we can model Gandhi’s mantra to “become the change we want to see in the world.”

At the **team level**, OD practitioners can birth new ways of gathering and making decisions through our work with groups. For instance, the clients’ decision-making processes may not be built on bringing every voice into the discussion. Or the same process may use a “majority rules” model even with great dissent. As OD practitioners, we bring frameworks and values to help groups develop practices which democratize, integrate, and widen participation in groups. In these ways, OD practitioners can challenge unexamined attitudes, practices, and behaviors such as a sense of urgency, another cornerstone of

white supremacy culture that may impede all voices being heard.

At the **organization level**, OD practitioners can work with their clients to uncover the inequities embedded in their culture, including people and reward systems. Changing policies and practices at this level cuts across several intersections of oppression to build equity for employees across the board. An organization may address white dominant culture through a stakeholder-based strategy, a redistribution of collective power through structure, a reorganization of management processes into

equitable collaboration, a reinvention of reward systems with real living wages, and a deconstruction of biased practices and policies. Concentrating on these organizational systems of inequalities will create cultural change.

Pay Equity—An Example

A systemic change that involves people and reward systems is pay equity. Pay equity is defined as paying employees the same when they perform similar or identical job duties when experience, tenure, and performance are factored into the equation. Often pay equity is part of a larger intersection of identities and socio-economic factors.

- » The US has a documented wage gap history between gender identities. White women make \$0.79 to a man’s \$1 in pay (Vagins, 2018).
- » The US also has a documented wage gap history between white people and people of color. Black women make \$0.62 to a white man’s \$1 in pay, and Hispanic women make \$0.54 to a white man’s \$1 in pay (Vagins, 2018).
- » The growing US wage stagnation is also affecting pay. Wages, known as pay

after inflation adjustments, have been diminishing in the US since the 1970s (Benmelech, Bergman, & Kim, 2019).

- » The US cost of living continues to increase despite the growing wage stagnation. Wages are not increasing at the rising rates of basic necessities like food, health care, and housing.

As organizations revise people and reward systems, OD practitioners can offer research and broader perspectives with leaders to change traditional structures and frameworks. OD practitioners build the system’s capacity to safely adopt these changes, embed equity, and adjust to the new dynamics throughout the organization.

Conclusion

OD practitioners, no matter their race or ethnicity, have the ability and influence to speak up and speak out to dismantle systems of oppression. OD practitioners have unique insights into processes, culture, and structure. We can use our roles to facilitate tough conversations at each level of work.

An equity and inclusion lens may be new to many OD practitioners. Developing this lens is worth the effort, no matter your experience level. In this work, each of us will trip up and confront the white supremacy trait of perfectionism. Not many people enjoy making mistakes, much less making them over and over again. As the poet Nikki Giovanni once said, “Mistakes are a fact of life. It is the response to the error that counts.” Knowing we will not do this work perfectly reminds us to plan and reflect, slow down and listen, and summon our courage to dismantle systems of injustice.

Dismantling injustice is part of our history. I think of OD leaders like Fred Miller and Edie Seashore who spoke up for their colleagues and spoke out against unfair systems (Kleiner, 2008). I think of Marvin Weisbord (2012) who brought forth dignity, meaning, and community as attributes of productive workplaces. I also think of people who are quietly doing the work now to build new knowledge, skills, and processes for OD practitioners. This

year has delivered new lessons in personal, team, and organizational agility.

If you're like me, a year-end holiday sounds amazing right now. However, our work is not done. We may be in the new age of heretics so let's rest up and keep going.

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“Based on the principle that people are unwilling to change until they know what won’t change, encouraging your clients to strive for clarity on core tenets like values, strengths, and vision creates certainty for individuals and grounds the organization.”

Thriving Through Times of Uncertainty

By Amy Simmons

The novel coronavirus, and the disease it causes, COVID-19, have sent the world into a tailspin. With the shutdown of schools and “non-essential” businesses around the globe, markets have become volatile, and economies and families are struggling to keep up. And as many organizations reopen without a viable vaccine, people are finding themselves choosing between their livelihood and their health.

While the entire world now faces a set of unprecedented circumstances—the likes of which few, if any, of us have seen in our lifetimes, the underlying sense of disruption is familiar. To some extent, we’ve all experienced transitional moments in our lives—the death of a parent, the birth of a child, a divorce, a big promotion. We have all been in a place and time when we were letting go of an old way, hadn’t yet reached the new way, and were suspended in that space in between—the space we’re now in.

As a global organizational consulting firm, we at the telos institute call these transitional moments “liminal space”—periods of discontinuity that create an openness to change. And when we understand the nature of liminal space, we can help our clients leverage these disruptions to accelerate growth.

While the markers of liminality may not always be quite so clearly defined as those of a global pandemic, there are indicators. For example, we look for the concept of threes and tens: as an organization grows—movement from thirty people to 100 people; three products to ten; a process involving three decisions to one that requires ten of them; \$30 million to \$100 million in revenue—liminality comes into play. Other markers such as a change in leadership, physical office relocation, and retirement all indicate liminal space.

We worked with 365 Holdings, a client relationship which began only months prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, to help them unleash the power of this liminality. Included in 365’s portfolio of brands is an online freeze-dried food company with the capability to ship globally. With the economic uncertainty of the moment, virtually every one of their competitors chose to cut back or shut down—taking the safe route.

However, the pandemic created an almost overnight global demand for freeze-dried products because of their extended shelf life. While the economic landscape of the pandemic suggested cutting back, telos was able to help 365 leaders recognize

the pandemic as liminal space, and therefore, an opportunity to accelerate growth. 365 took this moment to go “all in” with their products, quickly hiring new employees, maintaining three shifts around the clock and establishing expanded space to process orders. With orders immediately pouring in from around the world, 365 has more than doubled its workforce and increased revenue by 300 percent since the pandemic began.

Survive to Thrive Model

To facilitate this journey through liminal space for ourselves and our clients, we have developed the Survive to Thrive Model. The model is based on four important steps:

1. Name It

Help your clients recognize the markers indicating the onset of liminal space. Provide a name to your clients for this inflection point, thereby creating an understanding that grounds them and ultimately enables them to see the incredible potential in this disruption. An important component of naming liminal space is acknowledging that the future is unknown. Clients often need support—typically via coaching—in embracing the vulnerability this acknowledgement brings. At this point in the journey, there are no judgements, simply a cataloging of what is. This is an opportunity to help your clients take stock and acknowledge how they are doing while openly sharing their experience. 365 recognized the economic uncertainty of the times and the risks of moving forward. Once they identified the markers and named liminal space, 365 was able to see the potential for disproportionate returns on their investments of time and resources.

2. Identify What's Enduring

When everything seems to be changing, it is critical to support your clients in establishing what will stay the same. Based on the principle that people are unwilling to change until they know what won't change, encouraging your

clients to strive for clarity on core tenets like values, strengths, and vision creates certainty for individuals and grounds the organization. In the months leading up to COVID, we spent substantial time working with 365 to clearly establish their values to be used as a decision-making framework. 365 was then able to look to their values of ‘team and culture first’ and ‘relentless execution’ to make tough decisions as they realized the company's monumental growth.

3. Gather New Data

Encourage your clients to catalog what they're learning, seeing, and experiencing. Help them assess where and how their organization is getting new information to make informed, thoughtful decisions regarding the path forward. Identify new information sources to help your clients see things differently or see things they may not have seen before. 365 looked to data which identified market demand; at the same time they set aside the economic uncertainty that was driving their competitors to pull out. After reflecting on the connection between the data and their company values of ‘team and culture first’ and ‘relentless execution,’ 365 believed they had the culture in place to seize the opportunity before them. The company's commitment to execution enabled collaboration between operations and customer service to manage customer expectations when they faced delays in product delivery due to high demand.

4. Leverage Opportunities

These liminal periods of disruption are filled with disproportionate opportunities to shift and course correct. It is paramount to help your clients recognize the urgency and preciousness of liminality as 365 did. Encourage your clients to look deeply at what is emerging, what they are excited about, and, perhaps, what makes them uncomfortable. Ask your clients to look to initiatives they've shelved; liminal space may be just the opportunity to give these initiatives flight.

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Conclusion

Our goal as we work through the Survive to Thrive model is to help clients establish their own processes at every level of the system—individual, team, and organization—so they can leverage future moments of liminal space. In 365's case, their experience will enable them to anticipate the next disruption, such as the end of the pandemic and an expected reduction in the demand for freeze dried food. When this shift occurs, 365 can thoughtfully plan as one moment of liminal space ends and another begins.

Unfortunately, most individuals, teams, and organizations often fail to fully recognize the potential in leveraging periods of liminality. The opportunity costs associated with unwittingly overlooking these precious periods of potential transformation can be immense. Such a high price makes our roles as OD practitioners vital, serving clients as an important mechanism of support and challenge. By helping our clients navigate liminality, we can help them identify and take ownership over these periods of uncertainty and learn to thrive.

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