3

The Action Research Approach to Change

What's Inside This Chapter

In this chapter, you'll learn:

- What *action research* means
- The phases of the action research model
- How to use the action research model to facilitate change
- A process for organization alignment.

The Action Research Model

Action research is the model that is most commonly used in OD initiatives. Chances are that you have already been using it, even if you did not know its name. The term *action research* first came from John Collier who, as the commissioner of Indian Affairs, experimented with several methods for bringing about positive changes in ethnic relations. Picking up on Collier's work, researcher Kurt Lewin conducted action research projects, which included many of the models and methods in use today.

Action research is both a model and a process. In its simplest form, action research is a process whereby research, or fact-finding, precedes action and follows it. The thought process looks something like this: Fact-finding—action—fact-finding—action—fact-finding—action, and so on. The action research process takes shape as understanding increases. The process remains focused on the desired state and the how each systemic element needs to change. This approach to change and education can be found in many OD practices and methods.

Noted

Action research works much the same way as a guided missile stays on track. Guided missiles measure their progress and distance often and make small adjustments to ensure they hit their target. Action research is a process that begins with a desired state and makes adjustments as needed based on frequent measurements.

As a model, there are several phases that guide the OD practitioner and the client through change intervention with the goal of producing a desired state. The model uses the dynamic and iterative nature of action research in conjunction with fundamental consulting practices. The client and the OD practitioner continuously examine, reflect, and incorporate discoveries throughout the action research intervention.

Basic Rule 6

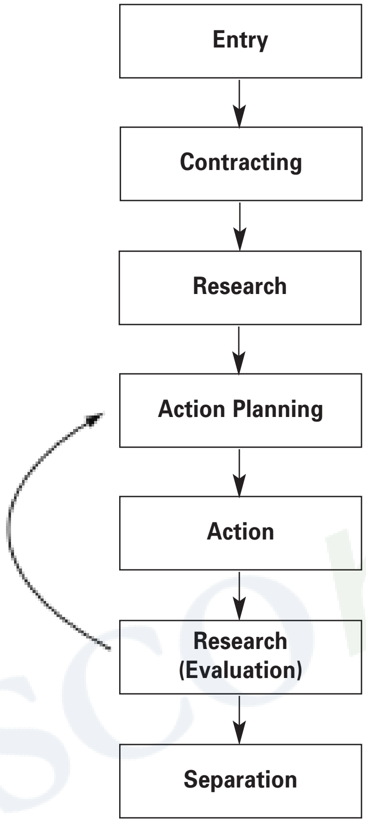
Action research is the model underlying many organization development activities.

There are several versions of the action research model, but they have common themes. Figure 3-1 shows a simplified model that includes the elements found in most action research approaches.

Entry

Action research begins with a client who has a need or desire. At this phase, the OD practitioner and the client have preliminary conversations about the desired state and a potential change initiative. This phase may last minutes or may be an evolving conversation over one or more weeks. The OD practitioner's goals during entry should be to determine who wants the change, gauge commitment for the change, understand the

Figure 3-1. Action research model.



change that is sought (in broad terms), develop a relationship with the client, and get a feel for the general issues involved in the initiative. If the OD practitioner is unknown to the client, the OD practitioner will want to share related experiences.

Noted

There is a difference between commitment to a desired state and commitment for the change process. The OD practitioner should offer information and ask questions that help the client understand the breadth of the changes needed to reach the desired state. Many change interventions fail due to a lack of commitment and resources needed to fully implement a change process.

Contracting

The goals of the intervention are defined, and the client and the OD practitioner agree on the roles that the client, the OD practitioner, and the stakeholders will play. Change efforts are more successful when both the client and the stakeholders participate in the process. The OD practitioner often takes on the primary role of facilitator and coach. In addition, the OD practitioner is expected to be an expert in matters relating to how organizations, cultures, and people change.

Think About This

Contracting can be a formal or relatively informal process. For large interventions, the OD practitioner will want to get agreements written down and described in detail. For many projects, however, the contracting can be done in a friendly, verbal conversation that establishes how you and your client want to work together.

During contracting, the OD practitioner and the client should also agree on how data will be collected; how and when the data feedback will occur; and the project's goals, plan, scope, participants, measures, and timeline. The OD practitioner works with the client to define desired outcomes and assess the client's willingness to embark on the intervention. What if a significant shift in current practices is required, how far is the client willing to go to get to the desired state? The OD practitioner establishes the current theories for why the change is needed and how the problems/challenges have occurred.

Contracting will take several hours of meeting time. At this stage, the client and the OD practitioner agree on the overall boundaries of the project, including any areas or topics that are off limits. The client and the OD practitioner agree on ground rules for the working relationship, including agreements about confidentiality, meeting frequency, and communication protocol. Table 3-1 offers a set of questions that you can use as a contracting checklist.

Research

(Note: Some action research models separate research into two phases: data collection and feedback.) Organization development practitioners take a systematic approach to

Table 3-1. Contracting worksheet.

Contracting Questions	Agreement
What are the goals of the intervention? What are the milestones and timeline for the intervention?	
What roles will the OD practitioner and the client play?	
Who will be involved in the intervention? Should the OD practitioner contact individuals directly, or does the client want to let them know the OD practitioner will be contacting them?	
Who are the key stakeholders, and what type of communications will the OD practitioner have with them?	
What needs to be measured, and are there restrictions or preferences for how the data is collected? Are there limitations on who can participate?	
What ground rules should the OD practitioner and the client use?	
How will the OD practitioner and the client communicate, and how frequently should the OD practitioner update the client on the project's progress?	
Are there specials concerns or considerations the OD practitioner should be aware of?	
What is the overall priority of this work relative to other projects?	

fact-finding. They assess how roles, processes, practices, systems, culture, the external environment, skills, technology, goals, and communication will need to change to reach the desired outcomes. The OD practitioner often begins with interviews, data analyses, and workflow diagrams, but other research techniques include surveys, observations, and brainstormings. Involving stakeholders in the fact-finding phase is critical for two reasons. First, the stakeholders are often the most knowledgeable; and second, involving them early improves buy-in for later changes. As data collection is under way, the OD practitioner develops theories about how to best enable the organization to reach

Think About This

During the contracting phase, the client and the OD practitioner agree to the scope and nature of interviews. Even so, the OD practitioner should be sensitive to political and cultural considerations regarding who should be interviewed and how. For example, many senior leaders prefer one-on-one discussions over group interviews. Group interviews can be effective for some topics, but are less successful in situations where the group is tense or dialogue is affected by looming, undiscussible topics. In these situations, individual interviews will yield better information. Although not always practical or possible, it is recommended that you conduct individual interviews.

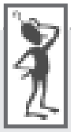
Noted

It is important that the OD practitioner maintain a calm and objective demeanor throughout the change process. Displaying emotions, like anger, disappointment, or shock, can have a negative effect on the level of trust and collaboration between the OD practitioner and the client or stakeholders. Read more about important behavioral considerations in chapter 6.

its desired state. These theories should fuel additional fact-finding and conversations to determine whether each theory is on target.

Once the initial research is complete, the OD practitioner reviews the data with the client. Depending upon what was agreed to during the contracting phase, the OD practitioner will either share his or her theories or the client and the OD practitioner will discuss the theories together. In either case, the focus is on using the information to determine the key organizational levers that should be adjusted to help the organization get to its desired state.

It is often helpful to present the data in a graphic format that will facilitate understanding and dialogue. The data should hit on all aspects of the system, including the structure, roles, systems, processes, culture, rewards and reinforcements, skills, management and leadership (a subset of structure, but important to call out), technology, and communication. Assessment and feedback often lead into the action planning phase, but do not rush it. It is important that the client has the time to understand, think about, and accept the data. Based on the feedback session(s) and the questions that have risen, the OD practitioner and the client may choose to collect additional information or move on to the action planning phase.



Think About This

It is a good idea to share the data with senior management or the client before meeting with a broader group. If the data is being shared with a group of people, it is courteous to share the information with the client first, a day or two before the feedback meeting. The client does not want to be surprised, and he or she might be able to offer additional information or context for the data that will be beneficial to share at the feedback meeting. Sharing the data does not mean that the client can change it, so the OD practitioner will need to be clear about that. Sharing the information with the client before others is a professional courtesy and enables the client to prepare his or her response or reaction.

Action Planning

The OD practitioner and the client have reviewed the data and are now ready to craft an initial plan. Often the OD practitioner is asked to create a draft plan for review with the client. Sometimes the client prefers to create the initial plan with the OD practitioner. In inclusive environments, a team of people craft the plan together. (This is ideal.) The initial plan should answer these questions:

- What is the picture/vision?
- What will change (roles, processes, structure, practices, projects)?
- Who is involved?
- How will changes be communicated?
- When will changes occur?
- How will the OD practitioner and the client help people transition? (See chapter 5.)
- How will changes be monitored and measured?
- What does success look like?
- What resources are required?
- What OD methods will be used to effect the changes?

The action planning phase is critical, and you should allow enough time to develop a thorough plan. This is particularly important when designing role and structure changes. Be sure to define how roles will change and how these changes will affect other roles, processes, and projects.

The OD practitioner recommends methods to facilitate various changes. For example, should there be a large-group intervention to kick off the process? Will small-group training sessions be required? Do processes need to undergo a realignment effort? Should leaders receive coaching? Will the changes warrant modifications to the performance-management systems? Should the intervention include a process for culture change? Does change need to begin with strategic planning or visioning? More information about the application of these and other OD methods is included in subsequent chapters. Factors that affect which methods should be employed during the intervention include

- the scope of the change—the amount of the system that will be affected
- the areas of greatest need—skills, technology, processes
- the number of people involved in the change
- the level of resistance to the change
- the organization's current culture and readiness for the change.

Think About This

Which OD methods should you use as part of a change intervention? The experience of the OD practitioner will be most apparent during the action planning phase. There are many ways to create a particular outcome, and it is important to consider methods and practices that are the best match for the organization and the client. Early in their careers, OD practitioners should consult with other OD practitioners to generate several options to consider. It might be necessary to hire outside OD professionals to execute particular projects or events.

Most change initiatives underestimate the need for and value of communication. Organization development practitioners should help the client structure regular and open communication sessions that inform employees about changes and serve as a forum to discuss questions and concerns. This should be a condition of moving forward with the initiative. The result of the action planning stage is an intervention plan.

Action

This is the phase of action research that is the "action." Together, the OD practitioner, the client, and the stakeholders launch the intervention. It is important to monitor each action thoroughly and make immediate adjustments if warranted. The OD practitioner should regularly update the client and err on the side of over-communication. A well-planned action phase will include a few early wins to give the intervention attention and positive momentum. The intervention plan should focus on desired outcomes and intermediary milestones.

Noted

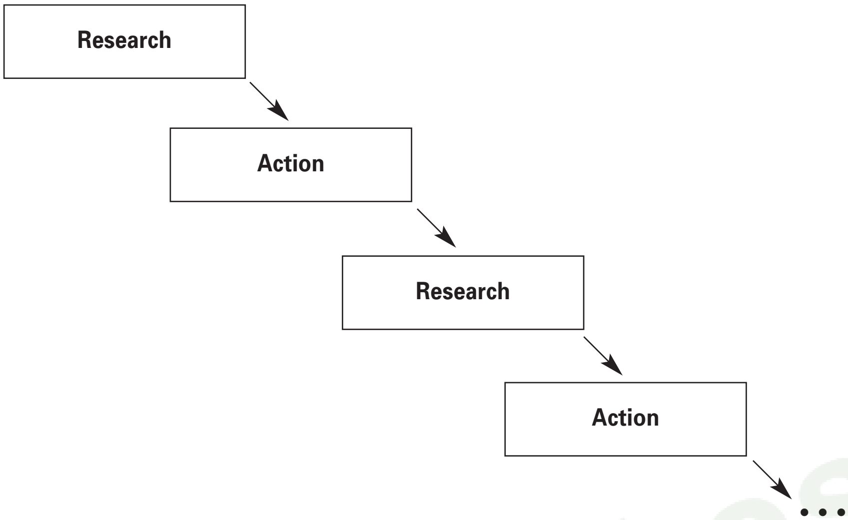
Kick-off events help mark the ending of what's changing and articulate the new beginning. The kick-off does not have to be large or lavish, but there should be some meeting or event that marks the beginning of the change process and prepares employees for what is coming.

Various elements of the intervention can occur concurrently, but beware of causing confusion or bumping against limitations of capacity. Clients can be eager to implement changes and may initially overcommit people or other resources. (This is quite common.) If this occurs, quickly adjust the plan. It is more important to execute the intervention well than to get it done quickly.

Research (Evaluation)

Action research works because action follows research and research follows action, as pictured in figure 3-2. It is a process of staying in action while evaluating along the way. This is an important part of the model because it is difficult to predict how various elements of an intervention will work and interrelate. Sometimes results are better than expected, sometimes results are disappointing, and sometimes results are just different than planned. The OD practitioner should facilitate a review of the data gathered since launching the intervention and encourage lively dialogue with the client about the results. New learning has been occurring, and you want to take advantage of this knowledge. Data should be presented in a form that is most helpful and was negotiated during the contracting phase. Often, the OD practitioner will present information colored with anecdotal reports from key stakeholders. It is best to offer both quantitative and qualitative data.

Figure 3-2. Interactive nature of action research.



Basic Rule 7

The iterative process of research, then action, then research is fundamental to the action research approach and many OD methods.

The OD practitioner should resist the need to vigorously defend actions that are not working or are being questioned. The objective is to implement actions that will work and be supported. It is not helpful to become personally invested in any particular method or action. Another goal of action planning is to help the organization build its capacity to learn, plan, and manage change. The OD practitioner should strive to leave each intervention having helped the organization become stronger and more able.

If there is still important work to be done before reaching the desired state, the process continues at the action planning phase. If the results are satisfactory and the client feels ready to complete the intervention, the change process moves into the separation phase. This phase includes planning for maintaining the progress that has already been achieved.

Separation

The separation phase serves two purposes. First, the OD practitioner will share recommendations for how to maintain the progress achieved by the intervention. These recommendations should be detailed and highly actionable. The easier it is to support the changes, the better. The OD practitioner should also offer summarized documentation of the change effort.

Noted

A good separation is something to celebrate! Some OD practitioners resist separation or never fully separate. Separation means this intervention is complete. It does not mean that the work with this client is done.

The second purpose of the separation phase is to end the consultant-client relationship (relative to this intervention) on a high note. There comes a time in the project where it is clear that time is better spent on other projects. The OD practitioner should plan a final meeting with the client to request feedback about the relationship and the process (the communication, methods, facilitation, results, variety and quality of recommendations, effectiveness of the coaching, and development of the plan).

While the phases of action research have been presented in a neat and sequential manner, it does not always go this way. The OD practitioner should use the action research model flexibly to meet the client's needs and fit within the organization's culture. For example, in more dynamic environments, action planning and action may occur concurrently. Research and action planning may need to occur at the same time. When working on a very large change effort, it may be wise to pilot the change effort with a small group before launching the process across the organization. It is also common for the pace and commitment level to change midway through the project.

Organization Alignment—Ensuring the Organization Is Set Up for Success

A well-aligned organization hums with efficiency. Processes flow well and are effective. Employee roles are clear and focused on the most important work. Individuals are appropriately empowered and held accountable for producing results. Communication among departments is collaborative and enables each team to head off problems and prioritize. The organizational structure facilitates great dialogue and problem solving. Work is satisfying because it makes sense.

Few organizations are ever fully aligned because changes are occurring at breakneck speed. Poorly aligned organizational structures and processes cause numerous problems with quality, throughput, and results. When a structure or process is out of alignment, it no longer serves the goals of the team or company. Poor alignment can occur for various reasons, such as a change occurring in one area, but not in others. Sometimes the trouble is a lack of effective processes for getting the work done. Or it could be that roles have changed but processes have not, or vice versa.

A common reason for poor alignment is conflict among technology, processes, and roles. For team members, a poorly aligned organization feels disorganized, and getting work done seems more difficult. Ambiguous, confusing, and overlapping roles are also signs of poor alignment. Many clients assume that unproductive people are to blame for poor results. While there may be personnel problems for the client to resolve, it is more likely that the department's processes and structures are responsible for poor results.

The organization structure defines job roles, departmental interdependencies, and communication channels. Structure determines who makes the decisions and the depth and breadth of each person's role. Structure assigns responsibilities and accountabilities. The structure is part of the overall organization system that includes processes, practices, and culture.

The following sections describe practices that help OD practitioners ensure that systemic-organization elements are relevant and aligned. These practices begin by asking one fundamental question: *Is this organization set up for success?* Organization development practitioners should regularly ask this question because keeping roles and processes aligned is critical to ensuring optimal throughput and results. Start by looking at the big picture, then focus on aspects of the system that need attention to deliver results.

Basic Rule 8

Organization realignment is a process that helps ensure various elements of an organization's system are set up to support the company's goals.

Noted

Processes are ways of working within a structure. They may be as elaborate as a computer-controlled manufacturing line or as simple as a way to deliver interoffice mail. There are also de facto processes, or processes that have evolved and become standard practice without intentional design or planning. These processes need to be acknowledged and included in the organization alignment.

As is the case for most interventions, the process starts with contracting with the client. Figure 3-3 shows the typical steps you will take to realign the organization.

Organization development practitioners may also be asked to help an organization recover from a poorly implemented change. In this case, you will want to refer to the previous sections on action research and chapter 5.

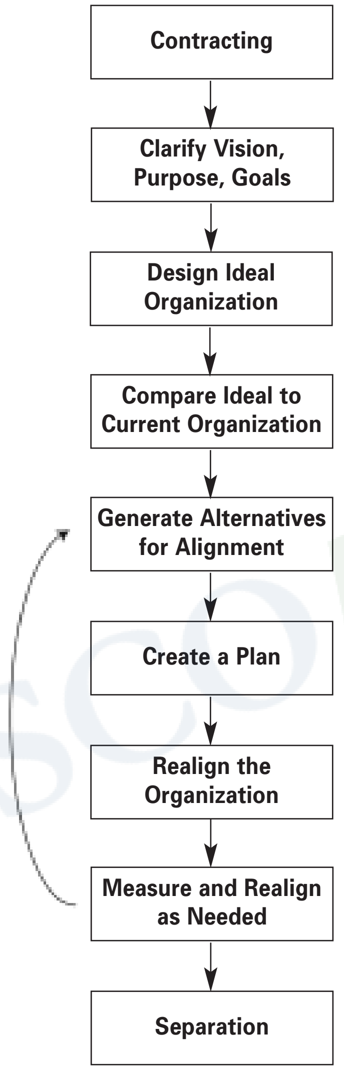
Clarify the Vision, Purpose, and Goals

It is important that each department's vision and purpose are inspiring and represent its contribution to the business. Here is an example of what the vision, purpose, and goals might look like for an accounting group:

- *Vision:* There is an expectation that, as the functional experts, the team will oversee the organization as it follows appropriate procedures to ensure fiscal accuracy and compliance with regulations and audit principles. As the organization increases its presence on the Internet, it expects the accounting team to support and process sales transactions that come over the Website.
- *Purpose:* The accounting group is an internal service team and has an opportunity and responsibility to provide timely and beneficial services, information, practical analysis, effective solutions, and thorough answers to inquiries to both internal and external customers.
- *Goals:* Over the next year, the accounting team's four major goals are to

  1. Improve the efficiency of invoice processing by reducing errors by 50 percent, and improve processing speed by 15 percent while maintaining or improving current processing costs.

Figure 3-3. Organization alignment.



2. Improve purchasing and billing processes related to field operations, including improving purchase order and invoice transmittal and reducing the cost of the processing by 10 percent or more.
3. Design and launch accurate and helpful reports that enable department supervisors to manage their areas more proactively and effectively. This

effort should lead to an overall reduction in budget variances by the third month of implementation. Eliminate obsolete reports.

4. Create and implement a strategy that supports the company's plans for selling products and services on its Website. Develop online shopping cart services and reconciliation methods to ensure the proper collection and management of revenues.

Noted

A department's vision describes the desired future state. The purpose describes the ideal contribution the group makes to the company. The goals are the most important changes, improvements, or projects that the group will embark upon over the next year to realize its purpose and move toward the vision.

Think About This

Departments often see their vision and purpose much smaller than is optimal. Many people have not thought about their functions in these terms before. You may need to help teams think big by providing inspiring examples and asking questions that help them examine their purpose and vision fully. To create a meaningful purpose, ask questions about why the function is critical to the company's success.

Design an Ideal Organization Model, Process, and Culture

This phase of the realignment is important and should not be shortchanged. Consider charting the discussion as it develops so that the team can visualize the design. If you do not use the appreciative inquiry model (discussed in chapter 4), these questions will get you started:

- What is the long-term direction of the company, and how should the manager and the team design today's work with this in mind?
- What is the most important work this team could do?

- What needs to be accomplished to meet or exceed the team's goals? Look at each goal individually, then as a whole.
- To do this work, what roles are required? How should the department divide work among individuals and teams?
- How should managers and team members make decisions?
- What should the key processes be and how should they work? What processes would make the work easier and more efficient?
- What role should technology play?
- How would the team and process link to the rest of the company?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of this organization design?
- What human, process, and technology resources are needed to make this organization structure work?
- If there were no limitations on resources, how would you and your team design the department's structure?

If possible, involve the entire team in creating this design. In addition to clarifying the roles, it is important to identify the processes that would make the work easier and more efficient. Depending on the scope and breadth of the work you are assessing, this could take several hours to a few days.

Compare the Ideal to Current Systemic Elements

Once the ideal organizational design is complete, OD practitioners should bring the current reality into the realignment process and conversation. It is important to include a discussion of de facto processes. There are generally many more processes in place than managers recognize. For example, communication and problem resolution are areas where de facto processes are common.

Think About This

When helping a group create the ideal organization, it is important to help them set aside the constraints of the current reality and think from a blue-sky perspective. Continuously challenge their ideas and ask whether this model represents the ideal organization. Bring in current business magazines or industry trade journals to generate inspiring ideas. Don't call the process complete until you are sure that they have created the ideal organization.

For each area of the ideal organization, note the current conditions and highlight key barriers, gaps, and restrictions (like regulatory requirements). You should also indicate where there are gaps but no major barriers getting in the way of moving to the ideal state. It is important to thoroughly explore cultural elements as they may be some of the more important and difficult elements to change. For example, the ideal state may call for a nimble, transition-enabled, and innovative culture. The current state may be quite the opposite. It is important to emphasize the changes in assumptions, beliefs, practices, leadership, and policies that would need to be addressed to create the cultural change.

Generate Alternatives That Improve the Organization's Alignment

During this part of the realignment, the team will need to blend the ideal scenario with current roles, personnel, and processes. There are always going to be some compromises required. It is important to stand firm for the changes that are most important and be flexible and nimble in areas where multiple approaches might work.

The team should ask and explore these questions to fully understand what they are about to begin:

- How far apart is the ideal organization model from the current state? What are the differences and similarities?
- Is the ideal organization possible and practical?
- If the ideal organization is worth attaining (it should be if you asked the right questions), what might a transitional organization look like? How can the department begin its journey to ideal alignment?
- What aspects and processes of the current organization should not be changed? Why?

Think About This

Groups will tend to be conservative when comparing the ideal state to the current reality. You want the group to consider all barriers and gaps, but you should question them on whether these challenges can be overcome. Make sure that they are not jumping to conclusions about what can and cannot change.

- What further information or research do you and your team need to understand these ideas and choices? (Do this analysis and research before making decisions.)
- What objections or concerns will senior management or peers have about these ideas? Are they valid? How can you and your team overcome these objections?

Notice where the team is struggling or where its thinking might need to be challenged. After this phase, you will know the ideas on the table and the pros and cons of each. You will also have a good idea of how much needs to change to create alignment. This is a useful and illuminating process.

A word about team-member participation: The general rule is that you should include input from team members and peers as much as possible. Depending on the nature of the realignment, it may not be appropriate to include team members in discussions about redesigning roles and processes. If jobs might be eliminated, then team members should not participate in the final design of roles. If team members ask whether jobs might be cut (they are probably wondering even if they do not ask), it is best that the manager be open and honest. The purpose of the organizational realignment and redesign is to figure out how the department can be more efficient and effective. This may mean that some processes and jobs will change, but the final details will not be clear until the realignment plan is complete and approved. If people are likely to be affected, you should help your client get through the redesign process as quickly as possible. If the organizational realignment is going to be significant and include major role changes, it might be best to complete the entire

Think About This

Use visuals throughout this realignment process. It is helpful to commandeer a war room and plaster the walls with the ideal state, the current state, the gaps, and the alignment alternatives. If a war room is not available, use charts that can be taken down and put up every time the group meets. It is helpful if the team continually refers to the ideal state when designing realignment alternatives. You may also want to use a computer program that offers technology-driven solutions, like mind mapping and business-process mapping programs.

redesign process confidentially and without team-member participation. That said, if team members are not included in the redesign process, you will need to take other steps to ensure the design team has thorough and accurate information from which to make decisions.

Create a Plan for Realigning Systemic Elements

This is the phase of the realignment where senior management is briefed (if they have not been involved throughout the process). The team should create two or three realignment approaches based on the information collected and discussions that have occurred. If there is one alternative that is significantly better than the other possible plans, then present only one plan. Because more than one workable scenario often exists, it is best to prepare and present more than one option. As the planning progresses, the team may eliminate choices based on criteria, including cost, ease of use, technology, or a hassle factor. The exception to this rule is when the team feels confident and positive about an organizational design it has created. If it has done its homework and included the appropriate people in discussions, then it should present this recommendation and sell it with passion to the key stakeholders and decision makers. Energy and passion account for much of the success of any plan. Whether presenting one or more alternatives, each plan should include

- a review of the vision, purpose, and goals the realignment seeks to support
- a review of the proposed realigned organization and processes, and the results that the proposed organization will produce
- a plan for transition of personnel roles and processes
- a description of roles and interdependencies between team members
- a description of major processes
- an explanation of how the work will flow among groups
- a breakdown of short-term and long-term costs.

Depending on the scope of the plan, preparing it could take anywhere from a few hours to a couple of weeks. Don't rush the process if more analysis and creativity will make the plan significantly better. As the plan is coming together, encourage a manager to play devil's advocate and challenge the plan to ensure that it answers potential objections and meets the needs of supporters and naysayers. It is useful to present the plan to a small group and ask for their input (provided the information is appropriate to share). Help the team adjust the plan based on this feedback.

Think About This

Help the team dry run the plan several times and get as much input as practical. Even when you have included a wide variety of people throughout the planning stages, it is inevitable that one or more perspectives are left out and not addressed. The dry runs will help surface any additional perspectives, and you can have the group consider the input as needed before the final presentation.

The team presents the plan and gains approval! They should provide backup information and details as needed. The OD practitioner should ensure that the team takes the time to prepare for the presentation of the plan, as this will speed up its approval.

Realign the Organization

The implementation of new structures and processes is critical to the success of the realignment. To ensure that team members and peers support the new way of doing the work, the OD practitioner should

- Work with management and human resources on the timing of the plan's implementation, especially if any individual jobs or positions are affected.
- Coach the client, the managers, and the team members on ways to communicate the vision, the realignment plan, the transition plan, and the role of each team member. They also need to share the plan with peers and gain their support. Timing of communications is critical. If an individual's job is changing significantly, the managers should talk to him or her one-on-one before any team announcements occur.

The communication plan should include

- a rollout or general announcement (see chapter 5)
- a clear plan for the transition of roles and processes
- daily or weekly progress chats as needed.

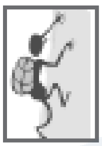
The client, the managers, the team members, and the OD practitioner should be available and ready to listen to any concerns, suggestions, or questions.

Be flexible enough to accept that the plan may need to be altered. Take time every day to check in with the client and the design team. Do not micromanage the process, but show support and invite feedback.

Measure the Progress, and Realign as Needed

As the realignment rolls out and takes hold, it is important to monitor and measure performance and productivity. After all, that is why changes were made in the first place. Measures should be communicated clearly and discussed often. Key measures and milestones should be posted in a visible place in the department.

In an aligned organization, hassles go down and the work environment is more intrinsically motivating. It runs like a well-oiled machine. To ensure the organization stays aligned, it needs to be evaluated regularly and as changes occur. While there are always elements of the system that need realignment, it is a good idea to evaluate the overall alignment of departments every two years, and then follow up with smaller redesign efforts as needed. For example, if your company launches a new product line, a portion of the department's work, processes, and roles may need realignment.



Getting It Done

In this chapter, you learned about the action research model for change implementation and an approach to organization alignment. The action research model may seem a bit daunting until you try it. Use exercise 3-1 to generate ideas for applying action research.

Exercise 3-1. Ideas for applying action research.

Use this exercise to generate ideas for ways you can apply action research in your organization.

Organizational Changes That Might Call for Action Research	Your Organization
List the changes that your company is struggling with.	
Given the company's goals and vision for the future, what changes are imminent?	
List any major product-development projects.	
List any systems upgrade projects occurring in the next year.	
List cultural changes that would help the company become more competitive and successful.	

Use exercise 3-2 to assess the alignment of the organization relative to one of its major goals.

Exercise 3-2. Assessing organization alignment.

List one of your company's major goals for the year.

____

Indicate whether the following systemic elements are aligned for optimal success and the reason why you believe this. Share your thoughts with your manager or client.

Systemic Elements	Aligned for Success	Why
Structure	☐ Yes ☐ No	
Culture	☐ Yes ☐ No	
Processes	☐ Yes ☐ No	
Practices	☐ Yes ☐ No	
Goals	☐ Yes ☐ No	
Organization metrics	☐ Yes ☐ No	

Systemic Elements	Aligned for Success	Why
Communication and decision-making processes	☐ Yes ☐ No	
Technology	☐ Yes ☐ No	
Workflow	☐ Yes ☐ No	
Skills	☐ Yes ☐ No	
Management practices	☐ Yes ☐ No	

In the next chapter, you will learn about a popular and relatively new model for organization changes called *appreciative inquiry.*

This page intentionally left blank