

Process consultation (PC) represents an approach or a method for intervening in an ongoing system. The crux of this approach is that a skilled third party (consultant) works with individuals and groups to help them learn about human and social processes and learn to solve problems that stem from process events. This approach has been around a long time; many practitioners operate from this stance. Edgar Schein pulled together the disparate practices and principles of process consultation in a comprehensive exposition.¹⁶ Schein also describes the role of PC in organization development.

Process consultation consists of many different interventions; it is not any single thing the consultant does. The paramount goal of PC is stated by Schein as follows:

The job of the process consultant is to help the organization solve its own problems by making it aware of organizational processes, the consequences of these processes, and the mechanisms by which they can be changed. The process consultant helps the organization to learn from self-diagnosis and self-intervention. The ultimate concern of the process consultant is the organization's capacity to do for itself what he has done for it. Where the standard consultant is more concerned about passing on his knowledge, the process consultant is concerned about passing on his skills and values.¹⁷

Some particularly important organizational processes are communications, the roles and functions of group members, group problem solving and decision making, group norms and group growth, leadership and authority, and intergroup cooperation and competition.¹⁸ The PC consultant works with the organization, typically in work teams, and helps them to develop the skills necessary to diagnose and solve the process problems that arise.

Schein describes the kinds of interventions he believes the process consultant should make:

1. Agenda-setting interventions, consisting of:
 - questions which direct attention to interpersonal issues.
 - process-analysis periods.
 - agenda review and testing procedures.
 - meetings devoted to interpersonal process.
 - conceptual inputs on interpersonal-process topics.
2. Feedback of observations or other data, consisting of:
 - feedback to groups during process analysis or regular work time.
 - feedback to individuals after meetings or after data-gathering.
3. Coaching or counseling of individuals [see discussion following].
4. Structural suggestions:
 - pertaining to group membership.
 - pertaining to communication or interaction patterns.
 - pertaining to allocation of work, assignment of responsibility, and lines of authority.¹⁹

In Schein's view, the process consultant would most often make interventions in that same order: agenda setting, feedback of observations or other data, counseling and coaching, and, least likely, structural suggestions. Specific recommendations for the solution of substantive problems are not listed because to Schein such interventions violate the PC model in that the consultant is acting as an expert

In *coaching and counseling interventions*, which may be considered either as a part of PC or as a set of interventions in their own right, the consultant is placed in the role of responding to such questions from groups or individuals as "What do you think I should do in this instance to improve my performance?" "Now that I can see some areas for improvement, how do I go about changing my behavior?"

Schein sees the consultant's role in coaching and counseling situations to be the following: "The consultant's role then becomes one of adding alternatives to those already brought up by the client, and helping the client to analyze the costs and benefits of the various alternatives which have been mentioned."²¹ Thus the consultant, when counseling either individuals or groups, continues to maintain the posture that real improvements and changes in behavior should be those decided upon by the client. The consultant serves to reflect or mirror accurate feedback, to listen to alternatives and suggest new ones (often through questions designed to expand the client's horizons), and to assist the client in evaluating alternatives for feasibility, relevance, and appropriateness.

The basic congruence between theories of counseling and the theory of process consultation is pointed out by Schein: "In both cases it is essential to help the client improve his ability to observe and process data about himself, to help him accept and learn from feedback and to help him become an active participant with the counselor/consultant in identifying and solving his own problems."²²

A GESTALT APPROACH TO TEAM BUILDING

A form of team building that focuses more on the individual than the group is the Gestalt approach to OD. The major advocate of this orientation is Stanley M. Herman, a management and OD consultant. The approach rests on a form of psychotherapy developed by Frederick S. "Fritz" Perls called Gestalt therapy.²³ Gestalt therapy is based on the belief that persons function as whole, total organisms. And each person possesses positive and negative characteristics that must be "owned up to" and permitted expression. People get into trouble when they get fragmented, when they do not accept their total selves, and when they are trying to live up to the demands ("shoulds") of others rather than being themselves. Robert Harman lists the goals of Gestalt therapy as awareness, integration, maturation, authenticity, self-regulation, and behavior change.²⁴ Basically, one must come to terms with oneself, must accept responsibility for one's actions, must experience and live in the "here and now," and must stop blocking off awareness, authenticity, and the like by dysfunctional behaviors.

Stanley Herman applies a Gestalt orientation to organization development, especially in working with leader-subordinate relations and team building. The primary thrust is to make the *individual* stronger, more authentic, and more in touch with the individual's own feelings; building a better team may result, but it is not the primary desired outcome. As Herman says,

My objective here is not to provide instruction on making the organization culture safer, more pleasant or easier for the individual, but rather to help the individual recognize,