Grow OD: Complexity Workshops and Bootcamp 2014

We have an exciting opportunity for all you DoODs as part of Grow OD. During the year we’ve picked up a number of requests from OD practitioners about how complex things feel at the moment. Big problems to solve, competing tensions, seemingly impossible challenges to face. Fear not, help is at hand.

We’ve been in touch with Professor Eve Mitleton-Kelly from the London School of Economics Complexity Unit (a very cool place to work) and Eve has kindly agreed to work with us to help you manage all that complex stuff. There’s two parts available – an introduction open to everyone (well, 30 people who apply) and then a follow up more detailed Complexity Bootcamp for those who want to really get into the thick of it.

Introduction to Complexity Theory & Enabling Environments
8 September 2014, London

An understanding of complexity theory can help you work with the characteristics of your organisations as complex social systems. We often unintentionally constrain these characteristics and create the opposite effect to that desired. This one day workshop will introduce participants to the theory and how it can be applied to organisations.

Thirty people will be introduced to some key principles of complexity theory by Professor Eve Mitleton-Kelly and learn how they can be applied with the aim of transforming an organisation by co-creating a new culture, structure and way of working. They will also be introduced to the EMK Complexity Methodology, which is based on these complexity principles.

Using theoretical discussions and practical exercises in small groups, the workshop will look at ten principles of complexity theory and consider examples that illustrate these principles in real life. Participants will discuss the process of organisational transformation as a dynamic process, involving a continuous co-evolution, which involves not only OD practitioners, but all employees.

Workshop Outcomes
By the end of the workshop, participants will become familiar with:

- Key principles of Complexity Theory necessary for organisational transformation;
- How to work with those principles instead of constraining them, without meaning to, and thus setting into motion undesirable consequences;
- Co-creating an Enabling Environment to facilitate organisational transformation.
Criteria for attendance:

- Participants must have attended the 8th September Workshop;
- They will need to identify a challenge, so that they can apply the methodology to that challenge.

This three day course will allow a small group of participants to begin to delve into the methodology developed by Professor Mitleton-Kelly over the past 18 years, working with practical challenges in both the private and public sectors, as Director of the Complexity Research Group at the London School of Economics. The approach identifies the multi-dimensional ‘problem space’ of any difficult organisational challenge, including organisational transformation; and guides managers on how to co-create an ‘enabling environment’ that is not static, but co-evolves with its changing environment. Several real life examples will be given including a longitudinal study in 2 NHS hospitals and a recent study in Indonesia, to address organisational transformation and to enable a government agency, to better address deforestation. The focus of the course will be on organisational transformation based on collaboration.

In particular, the participants will be taken through a set of Guidelines on how to conduct semi-structured interviews and how to analyse them, identifying not only common themes, but also dilemmas (equally desirable objectives that appear not to be achievable at the same time) and underlying assumptions (the beliefs that influence decision making).

This will be in preparation for the participants to conduct a set of interviews and to analyse them. Follow-on workshops will help participants with Group Analysis, which reduces interpretation bias, identifies key clusters for action, and prepares the participants for the Reflect-Back Workshop they will need to conduct to present their findings to the interviewees and others in their organisation. The Reflect-Back workshop validates the findings and engages the organisation, and thus facilitates the implementation of recommendations.

Why Should OD Professionals Attend the Three Day Course?

It will provide them with the tools and methods to:

- Understand their organisations as complex social systems and work with the characteristics identified by the theory to effectively facilitate organisational change.
- Clarify the difference between ‘complicated’ and ‘complex’ systems. Complicated systems are machine-type systems, which can be designed, and their behaviour can be both predicted and controlled. None of these apply
to a complex human system, yet we consistently apply inappropriate tools and methods because we erroneously transfer the thinking from complicated to complex systems.

- Will allow them to identify the problem or challenge correctly and to set up the conditions of an enabling environment that will address the problem/challenge effectively and sustainably.
- It will train them to use some tools and methods, underpinned by complexity science, which can then be used extensively to address other challenges.

To book one of the places on the Introductory workshop, or the Introductory and the Bootcamp, please contact Rebecca.webber@nhsemployers.org by Friday 15 August 2014.

We expect the workshop to be in high demand so would ask you to write a short paragraph on why you’d like to come to the Introductory workshop, (or both the Introduction and Bootcamp), giving a little bit of detail about the challenges you and your organisation are currently facing that you wish to apply the methodology to.

A short biography of Professor Mitleton-Kelly is located on our website: www.nhsemployers.org/campaigns/organisational-development/grow/grow-od-masterclasses