3 Methods for Collecting Data

Mgt. 450

Three Major Techniques for Collecting Data:

1. Questionnaires
2. Interviews
3. Observation

Using these data gathering methods

- Each method has advantages and problems. No single method can fully measure the variable important to OD

- Examples:
  - Questionnaires and surveys are open to self-report biases, such as respondents' tendency to give socially desirable answers rather than honest opinions.
  - Observations are susceptible to observer biases, such as seeing what one wants to see rather than what is actually there.

Use more than one

- Because of the biases inherent in any data-collection method, it is best to use more than one method when collecting diagnostic data.

- The data from the different methods can be compared, and if consistent, it is likely the variables are being validly measured.

Demographics

- Information about the people you are gathering data from is important.

- Collect the specific demographics necessary. Some examples
  - Age
  - Gender
  - Income level
  - Ethnic background
  - Status (student, teacher, visitor)

- Be careful not to collect demographics that are not specific to your data collection purpose.

Questionnaires:

- Questionnaires are one of the most efficient ways to collect data.
- They contain fixed-response questions about various features of an organization.
- These on-line or paper-and pencil measures can be administered to large numbers of people simultaneously.
- They can be analyzed quickly.
- They can be easily be fed back to employees.
- Questionnaires can be standard based on common research or they can be customized to meet the specific data gathering need.

Questionnaires; there are drawbacks;

- Responses are limited to the questions asked in the instrument.

- They provide little opportunity to probe for additional data or ask for points of clarification.

- They tend to be impersonal.

- Often elicit response biases – tend to answer in a socially acceptable manner.

Sample Employee / Management Relationship Survey

Team Goals and Objectives		
Unclear; diverse; conflicting	1 2 3 4 5	Clear; understood; shared by all.
Role Clarity		
Employees are unclear about their roles; responsibilities and authority are ambiguous.	1 2 3 4 5	Employees are clear about what is expected of them; they know their responsibilities and authority.
Communications		
Employees are guarded and cautious when communicating with management	1 2 3 4 5	Employees are open and authentic when communicating with management
Decision Making		
Little opportunity for input; uninvolved; decisions made autonomously.	1 2 3 4 5	Decisions made jointly through group participation; plenty of opportunity for input; persons affected asked for their opinion.

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Interviews

- Interviews are probably the most widely used technique for collecting data in OD.

- They permit the interviewer to ask the respondent direct questions.

- Further probing and clarification is possible as the interview proceeds.

- This flexibility is invaluable for gaining private views and feelings about the organization and exploring new issues that emerge during the interview.

Interviews

- Interviews may be highly structured, resembling questionnaires, or highly unstructured, starting with general questions that allow the respondent to lead the way.

- Interviews are usually conducted one-to-one but can be carried out in a group.

- Group interviews save time and allow people to build on other's responses.

- Group interviews may, however, inhibit respondent's answers if trust is an issue.

Interviews / Focus Groups

- Another unstructured group meeting conducted by a manager or a consultant.

- A small group of 10-15 people is selected representing a larger group of people

- Group discussion is started by asking general questions and group members are encouraged to discuss their answers in some depth.

- The richness and validity of this information will depend on the extent that trust exists.

Drawback to interviews

- They can consume a great deal of time if interviewers take full advantage of the opportunity to hear respondents out and change their questions accordingly.

- Personal biases can also distort the data.

- The nature of the question and the interactions between the interviewer and the respondent may discourage or encourage certain kinds of responses.

- It take considerable skill to gather valid data.

Sample Interview Questions

1. How do management and non-management employees interact in the office?

2. How do you know when you have done an excellent job?

3. How do non-management employees learn about organizational change?

4. If you could change one or two things about the way management and non-management personnel interact, what would you change?

Observations

- Observing organizational behaviors in their functional settings is one of the most direct ways to collect data.

- Observation can range from complete participant observation, where the OD practitioner becomes a member of the group under study to a more detached observation using a casually observing and noting occurrences of specific kinds of behaviors.

Advantages to Observation:

- They are free of the biases inherent in the self-report data.

- They put the practitioner directly in touch with the behaviors in question.

- They involved real-time data, describing behavior occurring in the present rather than the past.

- They are adapting in that they can be modified depending on what is being observed.

Problems with Observation

- Difficulties interpreting the meaning underlying the observations.

- Observers must decide which people to observe; choose time periods, territory and events

- Failure to attend to these sampling issues can result in a biased sample of data.

Observation Protocol

- A decision needs to be made on what to observe.
- <u>Example:</u>
    - Observe how managers and employees interact in the office.
    - Observe who has lunch with whom. (Do managers and non-managers eat together? Do executives have a private lunch area?)