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Key Words: solo practitioner, ombudsman, reflections, job fit, vision, isolated

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Key Words: Ombudsman, Mentoring, International Ombudsman Association

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Key Words: Ombudsman, Transition, Training, Knowledge transfer, Successor, Induction

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Key Words: Ombudsman, Improvisation, Training, Listening, Conflict, Skill-building

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Abstract: Conflict is an inevitable phenomenon in organizational affairs, often necessary for participatory governance. It cannot be eliminated; however its negative impact can and should be contained. Managing the impact of conflict requires a robust and holistic measurement mechanism that can identify and assess the impact, and monitor and evaluate its management. To this end, a study spanning several months was carried out at a public sector international organization. This article draws from its findings, offering an insight into approaches to framing the essence of organizational conflict and using the art and science of risk management to capture its impact holistically.

Key Words: Measurement, accountability, participatory governance, risk management, ombudsman

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EDITORIAL

Flying Solo

DAVID MILLER, EDITOR

As if it were not difficult enough being often in the centre of other peoples' storms, holding fast to principled intervention when interests and positions generate vortices of confusion and distress, so many of us in the Organizational Ombudsman world do so alone. How do we manage?

Many of the papers in this Volume of JIOA address just this question. As with all Volumes of JIOA we herein simply scratch the surface. But in our self-appointed role of surface scratchers, we at the Journal commend these papers from those who have rich experience of what it means to fly solo.

Am I the only one of us to wake in the small hours of the morning from time to time with a painful knot in the gut and a worried sense of ground moving without consultation? When alone in our role, isolation can lead to doubt, a feeling that can feed interest-based parties with a point to prove.

I find the rubber meets the road in Ombudsman matters particularly when comes the need to speak truth to power. Especially unpalatable truths. It is at such times that we need the confidence of our Principles, of our training and preparation, and of our professional community. Sharing our successes is also very necessary — lessons are found in all shades of our experience. Mentoring remains as valuable with experience as when we are newly launched, I find.

Speaking as an Organisational Ombudsman in my seventh year, I remain surprised by the emotional intensity of our role. I fly solo and one of my few certainties is that without the support and care of cherished colleagues and friends — not just in the Ombudsman world — I could not do this job. As a remotely-located Ombudsman, who does most of his work at the end of a phone or laptop keyboard, I often find myself drawn into the unidirectional distress, bewilderment or venom of others, leaving me with the task of disaggregating impression from fact, perception from process, experience from hope. It is hard to do and almost impossible without touchstones real and virtual. On my wall I have the IOA Standards of Practice, and in my hard drive I have the contact details of trusted ears, hearts and minds. To my network of cherished colleagues and referents, deepest, most grateful thanks — you make my work possible.

In recent Volumes of the Journal we have explicated some of our Standards of Practice and helped to usefully unpack the hopes and principles contained in them. We have done this because our nascent profession needs the enervation of robust debate. We are too young for certitude (even if we know we are correct!). My conviction is that we need to give more attention to the needs and interests of solo Ombudsmen, and that those in multi-person offices also have lessons to learn from the arenas of *solitaires*. Our authors give some very useful hints in this regard.

Francine Montemurro provides rich reflections on challenges and benefits of solo practice, learned from having established Ombudsman offices at two US-based research universities.

Reflections in the form of a conversation between **Brian Bloch** and **Mary Rowe** also suggest good reasons for having multiple-ombudsman offices, and some possible downsides. Like many of our authors, they suggest an important conclusion — “The wisdom, reassurance, guidance, and friendship of fellow OOs is a necessity for OOs who want to remain effective in their work and balanced in their life.”

Sustaining that theme, **Mary Chavez Rudolph** and **Melissa Connell** review experiences to date of the IOA Mentoring Program, discussing the mission of the IOA Mentoring Program as well as history and lessons emerging from the process of matching seasoned mentors with inexperienced mentees.

Transitions in Ombudsman offices have possibly particular characteristics and some of these are explored by **Frank Fowlie** and **Chris LaHatte**. They base their reflections on the actual transition within a sole practitioner office and describe lessons learned from their transition process.

Adam Kleinberger takes us all in a new direction by presenting improvisation as a new approach to training sessions delivered by ombudsmen. Kleinberger describes the origins and context of improv and presents a practical example of a training session focusing on the skill of listening.

Shweta Dhiman closes the contributions in this Volume, describing a research study on how the impact of conflict could be measured within a public sector international organization. Drawing from her research findings, she offers an insight into the nature of organizational conflict; approaches to evaluating potential measurement tools; identifies Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) as the ideal framework; assesses the effectiveness of the organization’s Conflict Management System (CMS); and recommends ways in which the CMS can expand and evolve.

To all of our authors and their anonymous reviewers, the Associate Editors and I offer our most grateful thanks. Your work enriches us all and we are better Ombudsmen as a result. Thanks also to **Wendy Webber**, our graphics guru who pulls all our efforts together so beautifully. Some of us may be flying solo, *solitaires* or singletons, but all of us can only work well if we are working together.

For the New Solo Practitioner: Reflections from the Field

FRANCINE MONTEMURRO

ABSTRACT

Ombuds who work as solo practitioners are likely to face certain challenges such as isolation and managing a workload singlehandedly, as well as benefits such as functioning with considerable autonomy. This article sketches reflections from an ombuds who established ombuds offices at two US-based research universities, and is intended primarily for ombuds who are new to or consider-

ing entering the field as a solo practitioner. The article shares one practitioner's experiences, lessons-learned, and hopes for the future. The perspective is offered as pointers for the reader's consideration, rather than as a list of "do" and "don'ts".

KEY WORDS

solo practitioner, ombudsman, reflections, job fit, vision, isolated

I've been an ombuds at two institutions. Both were at research universities, and at both, I was hired to come in and open a new ombuds office. A few months ago, a colleague asked if I might be willing to share some experiences about life as a solo practitioner.

I write this primarily with new solo practitioners in mind, and for those considering work as a solo practitioner, but most of my experiences will be familiar to ombuds who work in team settings, as well.

1. Job fit.

"Oh, give us the man who sings at his work." — Thomas Carlyle, essayist and historian

When I arrived at Boston University in September 2009, I had this little fantasy that I could slip onto campus unnoticed, and that most people wouldn't know what an ombuds was or when to contact one. I figured I'd have weeks to settle into a sensible schedule, to think about marketing and promotion, to meet campus constituents, and to get a sense of the institutional

culture. Wrong! When I arrived at my temporary office and plugged in the phone there were already several voice messages waiting for me. I didn't know a soul in Boston, much less on campus. I had to build relationships, a website and database besides, and schedule appointments. I ran hither and yon with my business cards in my pocket and my elevator speech in my head. I hadn't yet been assigned a permanent office location. It would be another year before I could hire an administrative assistant. There was already plenty to do.

As a solo practitioner you can get spread thin. You have to manage a sometimes unmanageable caseload; you have to take time to build relationships with constituents but remain separate and at arm's length from them; you need to understand your organization's strategic direction; you need to step back from time to time to assess your own strategic direction; you have to set limits on the things you are asked to do and you need to explain why; you need to attend to mountains of administrative tasks that cannot be turfed out to someone else; you need to stomach the pressure of knowing nearly everything you do affects the reputation of the ombuds function. And you have to do it all yourself.

On top of that, while the work itself calls for constant interactions with other people, it can be lonely. You don't have the camaraderie, connections or friendships that develop from a more typical office setting. There are reminders that you are not part of the normal administrative structure and that sometimes you fall off your colleagues' radar. One afternoon, a month or two after I'd arrived at Boston University, I stepped out of my office to find the entire floor empty of people. It was spooky. I felt like I'd boarded the *Mary-Celeste*. At that time, I was in temporary quarters — a trustee lounge on the top floor of the administration building. That afternoon, there had apparently been a fire drill. But the lounge was built like a bunker, and I didn't hear the alarm. And no one remembered I was back there.

On reflection, that day is something I look upon with humor. But sometimes, not being a part of the normal administrative structure can be less than amusing. It's not unusual to be left off mailing lists of important announcements, events, new appointments, retirements, and that sort of thing. Rarely, does this happen intentionally. Mostly, it's because an administrative assistant was directed to send something to everyone in certain departments. And they figure you are a part of one of those departments. Regardless of caseload or years of service, you often have to remind people that your office exists, and that it does so as a stand-alone operation.

Confucius advised that if you *"look for an occupation that you like, you will not need to labor for a single day."* I can't honestly say I looked for this work. I arrived at it as a result of good fortune and perseverance. Working solo seems to be a good fit for me, for my personality type: I think I play well enough with others, but I don't need a team to thrive; I tend to be determined and don't need someone else to keep tabs or give much direction; I like feedback, but I don't look for validation or a pat on the back; and I like juggling a variety of tasks. The solo arrangement may not work for everyone, but for some of us, we wouldn't have it any other way.

2. Starting with a vision, and communicating it.

"I saw the angel in the marble and carved until I set him free." — Michelangelo

Having a vision is probably essential for any successful endeavor. But the ombuds role remains a mystery to people in many U.S. based organizations. So along with creating a vision we have to communicate it, clearly and often, to our organizations. That includes clearing up misunderstandings around what we do, identifying the organizational benefits of an ombuds office, and explaining the nature and limits of the ombuds role.

Most ombuds put their terms of reference front and center on their websites. Still, it's not unusual for colleagues to misunderstand the role. They may have expectations that are not realistic for a one-person operation, or at odds with our standards of practice, or too far afield from ombuds work.

There have been a few times when the requests I've received seemed quite interesting, and I have to admit I've been tempted to expand my range. Not long ago, I was asked to help conduct what would've amounted to a 360 evaluation (although it wasn't referred to as such.) I've had to explain why this kind of project would conflict with the ombuds role.

Training is a more common example. I often hold workshops on conflict resolution, negotiation, and communication. These skills can be presented in a number of contexts and tailored to different audiences. They can be offered frequently, if one has the time. As a one-person office, I've had to limit the number of trainings I've been willing to offer. I've had to explain that there simply isn't enough time. I've been asked co-lead training initiatives — to basically team up with another office. I've had to explain that it's unwise for an ombuds to appear too cozy with another office. I've been asked to give workshops that should be given by someone else — someone with current expertise on the topic at hand (e.g., sexual harassment, leadership, cultural diversity, intellectual property, etc.) I've had to explain that while I deal with the consequences of breakdowns in these areas, I'm not necessarily informed about the area itself.

Fundamentally, I dislike turning down these kinds of requests. Even as I do my best to explain the why of it, in some ridiculous way, I feel like a slouch. But declining such offers has been the only realistic route for me. There are times when I've had to think back to the vision I have for the office and my place in the organization, not to mention the fact that I am a one-person operation. And that has allowed me to safeguard both the integrity of the office, and my own mental health.

3. Different paths to creating a ombuds office.

"It is dangerous to make everyone go forward by the same road."

— *St Ignatius, Loyola; 16th century mystic; founder of the Jesuits*

Some organizations do a lot of research before starting an ombuds office. They understand the fundamental standards of practice. Their executive officers and their attorneys are on board. They know what they're getting into. But not all organizations take that path.

The conditions of my first ombuds job were not ideal. In the fall of 1997 I took one of those much-maligned "two-hat" jobs (Director of Affirmative Action & University Ombudsman) at the State University of New York at Binghamton. The idea for the position was hatched following a year of campus unrest. It was created with the best of intentions by leaders who hoped to improve responsiveness to various problems in the campus community.

The position, of course, carried with it many conflicts that were obvious to those in the field if not to those at the university. I took the job against the advice of every ombuds I'd consulted. I took the job because I'd spent nearly ten years investigating formal complaints and I'd seen the personal devastation that could result. I took the job because I had faith that this university — and indeed most universities — needed this function, and that that need in time would drive the creation of an independent ombuds office.

At Binghamton, it took about three years for the ombuds role to become fully developed. This was longer than I had hoped, but an Office for Civil Rights investigation and a spike in hiring made the affirmative action function much more demanding than anyone had anticipated. There were rough spots, to be sure, and there were people who didn't want the ombuds office to exist at all. There were times when my faith and my patience waned. There were times when I had to remind myself to give it time, that things were not going to happen overnight, and that I would have to stay committed to the vision the administration had allowed me to build.

As my caseload increased, the need for the ombuds service became evident to both the administration and me. That obliged me to become more adept at explaining why it could not continue as a dual-functioning office. Once the administration saw the need and understood the vision, it was ready to support the creation of a proper ombuds office. In 2001 the university hired a new affirmative action officer; and the Office of the University Ombudsman — independent and freestanding — was established.

When I left Binghamton in 2009, the university was facing serious budget cuts. The ombuds position was as much at risk as any another. This notwithstanding, the senior administration convened a search committee to refill the ombuds position. The committee selected an outstanding candidate with excellent credentials to serve as the full time University Ombudsman. At Binghamton, the path was a little curvy, but it got there.

4. “Independent” doesn’t have to mean “isolated.”

I. ASKING FOR HELP.

“Whenever I have knocked, a door has opened. Whenever I have wandered, a path has appeared. I have been helped, supported, encouraged and nurtured by people of all races, creeds, colors and dreams.” — Alice Walker

Sometimes I think it might be nice to have a senior-ombuds supervisor to advise me, to push me, and to challenge me. It would be nice to have someone with whom to share the workload and from whom to seek guidance. It can be exciting and stimulating to kick around ideas with like-minded people. But of course, solo practitioners work solo. There is no in-house associate to consult, no one to be a regular sounding board, help think through a challenge or vet new ideas.

As a solo practitioner I’ve looked to my ombuds colleagues for these kinds of interactions. And, fortunately most ombuds, by nature, seem to have overcome some basic competitive instinct. When it comes to sharing their knowledge and their time, they’re a generous lot. I know this because when I’ve reached out for their help, I’ve received it.

I started in this field with no ombuds experience; just a gut sense that the role could help make good things happen at the institutions that chose to create them. It was my colleagues — the ombuds I met through the California Caucus of College and University Ombuds (CCCUCO), UCOA, and TOA — who helped me figure it out, and who pointed me in the right direction. They sat with me, they chatted with me on the phone, and they sent me envelopes full of their own office materials and helpful background reading (this was before decent internet service.) It was important to build these relationships and it was important for me to reach out, not to wait for others to initiate contact.

And now, even after 15 years, there are still times when I’ll call a colleague to help me think through an especially challenging situation. Or I will drop an email to a colleague to test out a new idea or to see if a particular trend resonates.

Gandhi wrote *“if you don’t ask, you don’t get.”* Asking has very important for me. Asking has been a source of guidance and insight and new ideas. Asking has linked me with other ombuds with whom I have formed important and nurturing connections. Asking has furthered my involvement in professional associations. Asking has helped me feel that I am not out there by myself.

II. FINDING SOMEONE TO TALK TO.

“God gave burdens, also shoulders.” — Yiddish Proverb

Besides not having someone to consult on cases or to delegate tasks, being a solo practitioner can also mean not having an outlet for frustrations, worries, and venting. It can mean feeling unappreciated and unheard. There’s no one else to pick up a case if you need to go out of town, or to offer encouragement when you need it. You don’t have someone to keep you on your toes, or point out when you’ve gone flat and gotten into a rut. Ombuds confidentiality can intensify the sense of isolation.

We spend most of our day listening to others, but where does an ombuds go to be heard? I suppose a good therapist is an option, but while I was at the State University of New York, my confidant happened to be a Catholic priest. He wasn’t on the university payroll, but he knew the campus and he knew me. He had a kind heart, an open door, and shoulders broad enough for many of us to cry on. He was key to helping me feel less alone and more grounded. I called on him when I need moral support or to regain perspective, or when I just needed to vent. I did so without holding back. After all, I reported to the president, but he reported to a much higher authority.

5. Learning from your mistakes. Laughing at yourself. Forgiving yourself.

“Perfectionism is the voice of the oppressor.” — Anne Lamott, writer

Some of us remember that iconic scene from *I Love Lucy* in which Ethel Mertz and Lucy work at a candy factory wrapping chocolates that come down a conveyor belt. Things seem easy enough, until the conveyor belt starts to accelerate. Ethel and Lucy can’t keep up. As the pace overwhelms them, they end up stuffing candy in their mouths, blouses, and hats. And the belt just keeps speeding along. There are times when my work feels very much like that candy factory.

The rhythm of the academic calendar ensures peaks in caseload at certain times of the year. Unfailingly, the spring semester brings a major spike. People at this time of year are facing the pressure of the imminent close of the academic and fiscal calendars. Time is rarely an ally. I had an administrative assistant who used to refer to springtime as “the crying season” (referring to the visitors to the office — mostly.) Every year, I vow to stay ahead of it, and not get overwhelmed. And every year more chocolates come down the belt. At these times, things can feel more like crisis management than ombuds work. At these times, my grand plans for balance, making time for healthy eating, exercise, and reflection go out the window. At these times I wonder if I’m doing any better than Ethel and Lucy.

I've had to stop holding myself up to a standard of perfection when time simply doesn't allow for perfection. I've learned self-forgiveness. I've learned to accept that there are times when I'll look back at a case and wish I'd asked more insightful questions, offered more creative solutions, been more patient, done more research. I've learned that sometimes the best I can do is show up with a mind engaged and heart open. I have come to realize that all I can offer is the best I am at that particular moment.

6. Slowing down to go fast.

"Zen masters say you cannot see your reflection in running water, only in still water."

— Elizabeth Gilbert, writer

I once worked with someone who would let me know, in no uncertain terms, when I was losing perspective. She would point out that eating lunch at one's desk only helps one get old fast, and that if one died from overwork, one's organization would only go out and hire a replacement. She was a bell-ringer who let me know when I was running around like my hair was on fire. It was important, if not always comforting, feedback.

Work-life balance is no small undertaking these days. It's clearly the number one concern among the young clinicians and researchers I work with. I have a postcard taped to the side of my computer monitor with the sketch of Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man and the following quote: *"Every now and then go away, have a little relaxation, for when you come back to your work your judgment will be surer."* It's there as a reminder to make time for reflection and contemplation. Doing so is an investment that in the long run, helps me work more creatively and efficiently and stay attentive to who I am. It may not be a full week or even a few days, but I have found great restorative power in even brief, intentional retreats. And I find that when I return it is usually with "surer judgment."

For me, finding balance also includes permitting my brain a few minutes **not** to think. Spending every "free" second gaping at my iPhone does not help me accomplish more. Sometimes when I'm in line for coffee or at the bus stop, I even say hello others of my species. I find it restorative to just let my thoughts wander unfettered for a few minutes. And I feel just that much more clear-headed when I turn my attention back to the business of the day.

Solo practitioners don't have a co-pilot to remind us when we need to slow down or recharge our batteries. So we have to remind ourselves.

7. Controlling what's in your control. Letting go of the rest.

"The trees in the storm don't try to stand up straight and tall and erect. They allow themselves to bend and be blown with the wind. They understand the power of letting go."

— Julia Butterfly Hill, activist, environmentalist, writer

I thought I'd been very fastidious about establishing the independence and impartiality on my office when I was at Binghamton. I rarely went to lunch with others, I didn't attend office holiday parties, and I lived in another city 50 miles away so it was easy for me to keep work separate from the rest of my life.

Then, several years into the role, a faculty member came in with concerns about her department chairman. She apologized for bringing me a situation she thought would put me in an "awkward situation." She needed my reassurance that I could be objective given my "connection," as she put it, to the chairman.

When I asked her to help me understand this "connection" she said she understood that I was one of the people who lived on "the grounds of his estate." Huh? I'd once had a *pièd a terre* in a house owned by a woman who was not associated with the university. In any case, I knew who the chairman was but had had no interaction with him that I could recall — none. To this day I cannot fathom this particular tale, nor do I know in what capacity the faculty member understood me to be living on the said grounds.

At the time, I found the whole thing a bit creepy. But I also worried about what other impressions of my so-called connections or allegiances might be flying around out there. Now, on reflection, I look upon the episode with humor, and take it as a reminder that sometimes it's good to give up the illusion of control.

As ombuds we are constantly trying to influence how people perceive our offices, and for solo practitioners, "our offices" means us. We are constantly trying to maintain the reality and the perception of independence and impartiality. And there is wisdom in that. But there is wisdom also, in the inescapable truth that we, like other beings, remain at the control of the forces that be.

8. Continuing education.

I. FINDING THE TIME.

“Education is what remains after one has forgotten what one has learned in school.”

— Albert Einstein

My ombuds practice is informed by readings and trainings in a number of different areas that will be familiar to other ombuds — ADR, systems theory, organizational development, leadership, and brief family therapy come to mind.

Like other professionals, ombuds have an ethical obligation to develop our professional skills, and stay current in the field. As a solo practitioner, you run the risk of feeling isolated and worn down by a high caseload, and a long “to do” list. And when that happens it’s easy to stop growing professionally. During the months when my caseload peaks and I feel like Ethel Mertz and Lucy at the conveyor belt, the last thing I have energy for is professional development. Plus, there are more areas about which I would like to learn than time to I spend learning them. I’ve learned four tricks that have helped a bit:

First, I try to make a commitment to gather resources on a certain topic area, and at a given time of year I try to focus on it. It may be by reading books and articles, plugging into webinars, or kicking ideas around with another ombuds. My goal is not to become an expert in everything, but to take what I can from one area at a time. I know I can devote meaningful time only at certain times of the year and I make a point of doing so over summer and winter breaks when the campus is less active.

Second, I’ve learned to make time by looking at the way I work, and trying to abandon habits that are time-wasters. Obsessively checking and responding to emails and phone messages is one. We live in an age in which so many things have taken on a kind of urgency, and in which technology makes it possible for us to be constantly “available.” But of course very few messages actually need an immediate review or reply. I try to avoid the enticement by shutting off that infernal new-message chime, and by asking my assistant to hold calls for periods of 30 minutes so I can focus and get something done. In the long run, this helps me be more productive. It’s a time-saver. It also means my replies to calls and emails are more thoughtful (if not immediate.)

Third, I’ve learned to delegate. While some administrative tasks involve confidential information or require ombudslly judgment, and thus cannot be delegated, there are some tasks that can. I have given responsibility for developing the office webpage, creating artful marketing materials and PowerPoint slides, and researching articles and publications to my administrative assistant.

I have a dear friend — not on the payroll, but a born numbers geek — who reviews and checks my blind data. What takes him ten minutes would take me an hour. I've hated to give up some of these tasks. They're fun and provide nice break from casework. But at the end of the day doing so gives me more time for more meaningful endeavors.

Finally, it's not unusual to juggle a calendar that feels impossible. Sometimes it seems like I should be at least be *trying* to do two things at once. But I've learned that good work and good results arise from doing **one** thing at a time and from affording others the dignity of my full attention. I try to avoid the temptation of multi-tasking. Good intentions aside, it doesn't seem to save time or yield good results.

II. STILL LEARNING AFTER ALL THESE YEARS

"Life's been good to me so far." — Joe Walsh, guitarist & songwriter

I run into people from my organization at dog parks, theaters, and restaurants all the time. There are a small number of people at my organization whom I would even call friends! Friends share things with each other, but not all friends share all things. Except on a superficial level, I don't talk about work.

What would I do were one of them to need to the services of the ombuds office? Obviously, I couldn't delegate the case to someone else. I would have to give pause and serious consideration to how impartial and unaligned I could be in such a situation. And the more I practice, the more evident it is that, practicing well means routinely giving pause and consideration. One can't fall into rote methods or go on automatic pilot. The work keeps one alert and on one's toes.

Ombuds rely on standards of practice and best practices as a foundation. They provide a good starting point to guide ombuds work, but they also require mindful interpretation. The work calls for creative, sometimes unconventional thinking. Ombuds must give every situation an individualized assessment and analyze often very nuanced situations. Our approaches to problem solving have to be fresh. There is no room for bean counting. And sometimes, as Daniel Berrigan observed, you just have to do what you know is right.

"Ancora imparo" roughly translates as *"I am still learning."* It has been attributed to both Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci, two of the greatest minds of all time. Michelangelo is said to have inscribed it in work he created when he was nearly 90 years old. As I build the ombuds office at Boston University, I take this phrase as guiding wisdom, and as a reminder to stay alert and on my toes, and to do what I know is right.

The Solo Organizational Ombudsman Practitioner...and our need for colleagues...*a conversation*

MARY ROWE AND BRIAN BLOCH

ABSTRACT

It takes a village to produce a successful organizational Ombuds.

KEY WORDS

Organizational ombudsman, solo practitioner, continuing education, compassion fatigue

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mary Rowe has been helped by hundreds of ombuds, including, especially — in the present decade — those who work with JIOA and other IOA committees, those who are part of ECOG, and those with

whom she has written articles. She owes a special debt to Toni Robinson, Clarence Williams, and Thomas Zgambo, her MIT Ombuds Office colleagues of the present and past.

Brian Bloch is indebted to Arnold Zack for introducing him to the ombuds profession and to Mary Rowe who has served as Brian's mentor for over a decade. As with Mary, Brian has gained so much through his work with the JIOA editors/associate editors: David Miller, Alan Lincoln, Laurie Patterson, and Tom Sebok. Finally, Bob Cohen, Brian's co-director at ISKCONResolve, has been a tremendously insightful colleague.

The conversation begins... Mary Rowe

When I was first appointed in 1973, I often felt lonely, even though I liked my job. I will try to explain why I liked my job and why I felt alone. My initial job description was to see if I could "help make human beings more visible" at MIT. I really liked this concept and challenge and opportunity. The job description was a major reason why I accepted the job.

I also was content with the structure of the job; I was happy to be formally instructed by my first bosses, the President and Chancellor of MIT, to keep near-absolute confidentiality, and to serve independently from all line and staff structures. I also was (wryly) relieved to learn that I would have no managerial decision-making power, since I knew so little about the job; for this reason, practicing "informally" also came easily.

However, I quickly found that “making human beings more visible” is not an easy task, let alone for just one person. I found that my skills, (such as they were, if any) were only those of a single human being. Most people at MIT were male, most were Caucasian but some were not; some were born outside the US; all the world’s great religions were represented, each with its own spectrum of differences. The first language for many appeared to be mathematics. What did I know about all the points of view of all humans?

In addition, I was not yet formally designated as a *neutral* but I quickly learned that I was expected to be impartial. I learned this when I gave my new boss an overview of the point of view of a woman who had come to my office. My note was completely factual as a description of her point of view. I prided myself on my (appearance of) objectivity. However...my new boss wanted to know the other side of the story. Oh. Right.

What does it actually mean to “know” the experience of another person when each of us has been socialized into just one set of demographics; how would I learn to understand all points of view? I knew I needed help. In my first months on the job, I asked for a counterpart, preferably a man and preferably someone of color. And I began to collect ideas about solo practice vs. having a colleague in ombuds practice. In the event, over forty years, it has been much easier for me to work together, with a succession of extraordinary colleagues, than it has been when I have practiced alone.

It seems to me obvious that large institutions need more than one organizational ombudsman (OO) practitioner if possible. It provides the possibility of gender and race diversity, not to mention diversity by age, religion, nationality, language, experience and different pockets of wisdom. Each OO is likely to have his or her own network of helping resources, and inside and outside colleagues, whose wisdom can be consulted. The office will have more than one set of skills for coaching and training and case analysis. “Multiple-ombuds” means that our visitors have a *choice* of practitioner, which adds meaning to the idea of having options in the ombuds office.

I quickly learned that having a colleague provides *back-up* for vacations and illness, and less burden on the family of the OO practitioner. Having a colleague provides fail-safe in an emergency. Having an OO colleague helps to prevent burnout, by providing gallows humor and consistent encouragement. It is more fun.

One of the quintessential values of an OO is *responsiveness*, in a universe where instant response is desired, because of the internet. Responsiveness is also important since many helping services and managers are so slow to respond. Immediate responsiveness may also actually be needed, in serious situations, by managers, as well as by employees and students. Two OOs can provide much more responsiveness. Two OOs plus an assistant who is in charge of the calendar, who also can move appointments, can make sure that most callers are acknowledged within a day. This emergency room responsiveness, which matters so much to those whom we serve, almost certainly saves money for our employers in serious cases.

Having more than one ombud helps a lot in communicating about the office. Inevitably, the caseload depends in part on word of mouth. Word of mouth spreads geometrically. The outreach of people who “know people who called the ombud” spreads much faster where there is more than one practitioner.

In addition there is some evidence that different ombuds “attract” different kinds of cases. This is not just a matter of demographics, (e.g., women visitors who think they prefer to see a woman — or a man). One OO will, perhaps without really noticing it, become a bit of a specialist in disability cases, or high-maintenance-super-star cases, or with respect to intellectual property problems, or with very complex, multi-issue, cross-boundary cases with multiple cohorts. Then the mysterious word of mouth will bring that practitioner many more of those cases. Having these different lines of practice helps to deepen and widen the outreach of the office, and also to spread skills between or among the OOs.

Obviously one wonderful gift, for any ombud, is having someone with whom to consult on a case. This can be incredibly important where facts are missing or mutually contradictory, or where there are no relevant policies, or policies that are mutually contradictory, which is a common circumstance in an OO office — and the individual OO has to rely on his or her own judgment. Talking with a colleague helps to support one’s efforts in maintaining neutrality. Having a colleague also helps to protect ombuds confidentiality. Ombuds will breach confidentiality in time of imminent danger. But — *is* this an emergency? An OO colleague can help in making critical decisions and may see alternatives other than breaching confidentiality. Working with another person in the office means there can be less stress on each practitioner, to practice well.

Ombuds are among the few people, in any large organization who “see” and hear from an entire organization. Having more than one person learning about the organization, collecting information and working on systems change, greatly increases the range of information and wisdom that the office can develop about how the organization works. And about how the whole conflict management system could work better.

As with any profession, an ombud needs to keep learning. Having a colleague means that one has an on-site teaching partner. The other OO sees things differently, asks different questions, finds different situations humorous, and comes up with new options — and does so, all the time. Different OOs interpret the office statistics differently and see different kinds of ways to help a system to do better. Looking back I remember vividly many essentials of ombuds practice that I have learned from my close colleagues; reciting even a short list would take many pages. (My present and erstwhile colleagues are probably even more aware of what they have tried to teach me, that I still need to learn.)

In writing this I am also very aware of all I have learned from OO colleagues in other organizations. About 1980 I discovered that there *were* other institutions with ombuds. I will never forget what it meant to discover that I was not alone.

OOs from the Midwest Ombuds Group, California Caucus of College and University Ombuds, University and College Ombuds Association, Corporate Ombudsman Association, The Ombudsman Association, International Ombudsman Association, Association of Canadian College and University Ombudsmen, East Coast Ombuds Group, and many OOs around the world, have been very generous with wisdom and support — and with specific skills training and ideas. I am very grateful not to have had to practice altogether alone, since 1980, even in the years when my organization had just one ombud.

The conversation continues...Brian Bloch

While I agree wholeheartedly with Mary Rowe's analysis above, we as ombuds are used to helping visitors look at all sides of a situation. In that mood, I offer some possible downsides to the multiple-ombuds office.

MAKING DECISIVE DECISIONS

Although an organizational ombudsman does not have a decision-making role in the organization, they certainly make many decisions about their work. Collaborating with a colleague can make decisions better. It can also take longer and even lead to internal conflicts if the ombuds don't agree on a particular decision or even more generally, on the mission of the office.

CONTRASTING STYLES

We know that ombuds have varying ways of practicing their profession. Some place more emphasis on addressing systemic change than others. Some can be quite directive while others are strictly facilitative. Some ombuds mix more with management than others. Additionally, it is only natural that one ombud will have different personality traits than their co-ombud. While this can lead to a highly effective ombuds office, it can also create challenges if the ombuds differ with each other on serious matters.

EXPENSES

The IOA website includes several articles about how to communicate the effectiveness and usefulness of an ombuds office. However, it remains a challenge to demonstrate the on-going value of the office. This task becomes even more challenging if a solo-ombud asks for an additional ombud with the budgetary requirements that entails. Many organizations have only enough money for one ombud.

COLLEAGUES ARE AVAILABLE OUTSIDE

Rowe convincingly points out the various merits of having a colleague with whom to consult. While it is not the same as having a full-time colleague, she also mentions that ombuds are very willing to give time to their fellow ombuds in other organizations. This is one of the great benefits of being in the ombuds profession. For the many years I ran a solo-office, I estimate that annually I shared over 750 emails with fellow ombuds who listened, offered advice, and in general allowed me to develop in this profession.

The need for spending time with like-minded Ombuds

Whether you are in an ideal situation with multiple-ombuds—or are a solo-ombud—there is a real need for regular association with like-minded OOs. I was reminded of this recently when the editors of this Journal had a robust e-mail exchange about compassion fatigue and its role in the life of an OO. We compiled a list of its symptoms as well as a list of its causes.

We then turned to practical ways to address an ombudsman's compassion fatigue. At the top of the list was "Having a colleague or significant other to talk to while remaining within the boundaries of confidentiality." Additionally, we listed: "Looking at our other options (what might we have done differently), and thinking out loud with a colleague about that." We also mentioned, "Reading up on the profession and studying best practices," (which is another way of associating with OO colleagues).

Being able — regularly — to share thoughts and experiences with colleagues is invaluable. OOs have a challenging job. We can be affected by self-doubt. We are exposed to unfairness. We struggle to remain neutral when a party is acting inappropriately. Our patience and compassion are put to the test, especially when we deal with complaining visitors who are "self-made orphans." We are often exposed to the worst parts of the organization we work with. We may struggle with emotional fatigue and depersonalization.

The wisdom, reassurance, guidance, and friendship of fellow OOs is a necessity for OOs who want to remain effective in their work and balanced in their life.

Mentoring Program: Integral Component of IOA's Learning Community

MARY CHAVEZ RUDOLPH AND MELISSA CONNELL

ABSTRACT

The act of mentoring dates back to ancient Greece and continues to evolve based on the community involved. In this article the mission of the IOA Mentoring Program as well as history and matching process of seasoned mentors with inexperienced mentees are discussed. The article continues by exploring the future of the mentoring program and the need

to continue to expand and develop processes for the growing ombuds community. Lastly, the relevance of the IOA Mentoring Program and the benefits it offers to an array of constituents (individually and institutionally) are examined.

KEY WORDS

Ombudsman, Mentoring, International Ombudsman Association

There are numerous ways to share information about a particular topic. For example, when learning how to bake the perfect apple pie, one can attempt to follow the instructions passed down to each generation (i.e. *pour in a handful of sugar and a pinch of salt . . .*) or choose to utilize our most advanced technology (YouTube) and watch a short video by a renowned chef with each step visually and verbally described in utmost detail. Either way, it is the hope that the baker will end up with a dessert suitable for serving to the family. In this article the authors have chosen to blend a number of styles together to produce a well-rounded and informative essay about the IOA Mentoring Program. Starting with an interview with the founder, Vicky Brown, the reader learns about the history and reasoning behind the program. Following the interview is insight into the benefits, matching process, and development of mentors. Concluding is a brief exploration into the various types of ombuds the Mentoring Program hopes to serve. The reader will also note antidotal quotes from previous mentees that have utilized an IOA mentor sprinkled throughout the article. It is with intention that several viewpoints and aspects of mentoring are shared for a complete and thorough understanding of this program.

History of the IOA Mentoring Program (founded in 2008)

Spend an afternoon chatting with recently retired University of Central Florida ombuds, Vicky Brown about the IOA Mentoring Program and you'll hear the following: "Mentoring was always my passion," "I learned as much being a mentor as being a mentee," and "I never met anyone I didn't like." Fondly referred to as the founder and heart of the mentoring program, Vicky warmly recalls the early years, the many ombuds that mentored her along the way and her strong convictions regarding the importance of mentoring new ombuds.

"Well, it wasn't my idea — it was Mailie's!" As Vicky shares her memories of the creation of the first mentoring committee for the University and College Ombuds Association (UCOA), she wants to make sure that Mailie Saigen (retired ombuds from the University of Iowa) is given full credit for being the founder of the program. "Mailie, was simply wonderful!" The program, though small in the beginning, was personal to Vicky because she herself had struggled in the beginning of her ombuds career. She goes on to tell the story of her first ombuds conference in Chicago in 1995: "I left the first session of the conference crying! I thought, 'I don't know anything' and 'I'm going to do this wrong.' Had it not been for Kay Peters, a beautiful lady, taking me under her wing, I would have gone home ready to resign. Kay stayed with me the whole three days at the conference. She would be waiting for me after sessions and kept telling me everything would be okay. That's why it is so important to make a person feel welcome and do it kindly." Vicky then starts listing all the ombuds who helped her throughout her career but particularly that first year: "Marsha, Mailie, Judy, Tom, Mary, Claudia, Marvin ... there must have been twenty ombuds. Oh, I know I'm leaving a bunch out."

When UCOA and The Ombudsman Association (TOA) merged, Vicky decided to run for the IOA Board and as part of her nomination statement mentioned the importance of making new members feel included, welcomed and informed. Although the mentoring program was set aside for a while she and Marvin Neal who she describes as, "a wonderful, wonderful role model for ombuds and human beings," agreed to co-chair the first IOA mentoring program. Using the UCOA program as a guideline, they tweaked some of the information and sent out an initial e-mail to all IOA members. Within a very short time the program had eighteen mentees and twenty-two mentors from all over the world including Australia, Singapore, Canada and the United States.

Eventually Vicky was running the program on her own and decided she needed a task force. Mary Chavez Rudolph, University of Colorado Denver Ombuds and Claudia D'Albini University of Arizona Ombuds "good friends and good ombuds" graciously agreed to help her. Vicky continues, "We became an extension of one another," as they continued to expand the mission and outreach. Brochures were created, charts developed and a mentoring luncheon was developed to coincide with the IOA annual conference. It was a lot of work and Mary calmly states, "Vicky did almost all of it on her own." Reluctantly Vicky admits, "I was on the phone a lot trying to help people and make matches. In fact, at one point, I thought UCF was going to fire me because I was doing so much mentoring work! But I couldn't help it. I love people, loved my job and loved

ombudsing.” She continues, “Mentoring is important to the health of the organization, you (the new ombuds) get the help you need and you are welcomed into the community.”

After ombudsing close to eighteen years, Vicky retired in early 2011 then Claudia D’Albini in 2012. The mentoring torch was passed on to Mary Chavez Rudolph who chaired the program on her own until Carol Breslin agreed to be a co-chair. Today the mentoring program consists of a pool of over sixty mentors, and a Mentoring Program Committee of eight IOA ombuds. Over one-hundred mentees have had the benefit of a mentor since the Program’s inception in 2008.

Vicky ends our conversation with as much passion and warmth as she had started it: “You know, I couldn’t have done it without mentors myself. They are such a help and make all the difference in the world. Ombudsing is so unique.”

Mission of the IOA Mentoring Program

Having another professional who understands the triumphs and pitfalls of your work can provide a much needed catharsis; that being heartfelt laughter or sad commiseration. Some days need both!”

— Charmaine B. Tomczyk, Faculty Ombuds

The mission of the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) Mentoring Program is to assist new ombudsman (defined as a practicing Ombudsman with less than one year of experience) who are members of IOA make the transition to ombudsing a positive and rewarding experience. (International Ombudsman Association. (n.d.). Retrieved October 3, 2012, from <http://www.ombudsassociation.org/about-us/standing-committees/membership/mentoring-program>). The Mentoring Program may be especially helpful to solo practitioners who do not have the benefit of an experienced colleague to guide them through the murky waters of ombuds work.

The Mentoring Program Committee connects a novice ombudsman with an experienced ombudsman (defined as a practicing ombudsman with at least three years of experience). This personal relationship provides the new ombudsman an opportunity to consult with someone regarding setting up an office and discuss cases and issues affecting the profession. This relationship is somewhat formalized thus sparing the new ombudsman the awkwardness of continually relying on the kindness of semi-strangers to consult about, often difficult, issues that arise for a new ombudsman.

A case can be made that the International Ombudsman Association is a Learning Community. A Learning Community is a group in which members are encouraged to observe, practice, and share experience, methods and strategies towards a common activity or goal. (Peterson, 1992) The phrase “Learning Community” is mostly used in books and articles directed at novice teachers to remind them that a community that supports and encourages learning must be intentional.

Constructivist theory suggests that learning is not a passive activity like water flowing into a bucket but is an activity that depends upon the relationship between the learner and his or her environment. (Graves, 2012) Individuals construct meaning — if something we see or hear doesn't mean something to us we don't learn. "We need to learn how to talk about that meaning to truly understand our thinking. We need to listen to how others interpret our meaning in order to deepen our own understanding." (p. 3, Peterson, 1992) Creating a learning community, that facilitates meaning, requires many components.

In *Life in a Crowded Place: Making a learning community*, Peterson (1992) describes ceremony and ritual, celebration, conversation, and play as components of a learning community. Other components of a learning community are shared agreements, shared experiences, and shared language.

The International Ombudsman Association provides so many of these components. The annual conference provides ritual and celebration and play (ask anyone who attended the line dancing session in Houston). The social events hosted by IOA provide opportunities for IOA Members to get to know each other and foster a level of comfort and inclusion which is vital to facilitating a space where we can fumble, ask questions and make mistakes during our conference general sessions.

Many of us have the shared experience of attending an IOA Foundations course (previously called 101) which provides a shared language — along with our SOPs and our membership in IOA (confirming our commitment to the IOA mission) provides shared agreement. The Certification Program also provides agreement — about organizational ombudsman core knowledge and skills. The interactive nature of all of the IOA professional development opportunities are designed to facilitate learning and meaning through conversation.

Her knowledge, insight and understanding truly guided me through my first year and I know I will continue to call upon her expertise in the future. There were times when I was hesitant about how to handle something and she listened and in her special way, made me see things in another light or reaffirmed what I didn't have the confidence to say. One of the areas where she truly helps me is when the office or I are getting drawn into something that is really not appropriate for us and my gut tells me that but I am struggling to find the words to explain it. She breaks things down for me very clearly by referring to the Standards and the Code of Ethics.

— Shreya Trivedi, University Ombuds Officer

The Mentoring Program is a vital component of the IOA learning community because it provides for continuous learning by allowing the mentee the opportunity to discuss a real case — and it allows the new ombuds’s real life work experience to enter the dialogue. The Mentoring Relationship allows the novice to find relevancy with a more experienced ombudsman.

I want you to know, too, that it is not only IOA’s Mentoring Program that I have found helpful and enriching. I’ve now participated in two of the IOA workshops (Ombuds 101 and “Mediation and Ombudsing”), both of which were models of good pedagogy. I learned a great deal in each, did some productive networking, and made a few good professional friends. Further, the St. Norbert College Office of Ombuds Services not only adheres to the guidelines and principles in the IOA’s “Code of Ethics,” “Standards of Practice,” and “Best Practices,” but also enlists the sound principles articulated there to serve as the moral compass of our program. In essence, the IOA’s stated principles serve as our charter. And so, Mary, the IOA has been instrumental in both the building and nurturing of our fledgling program.

— Ken Zahorski, University Ombudsman

The benefits of the mentoring program are not only for the mentee. Mentoring someone new to the profession offers the unique opportunity to reaffirm the core values and share experiences and lessons learned in the process. The Mentoring Program can also serve as a feedback loop, to the Professional Development Committee, providing information about the types of questions, challenges, and assistance requested from mentees, which can be incorporated into training.

Matching Process

The matching of a mentee to a mentor begins with an IOA member filling out a request form (International Ombudsman Association. (n.d.). Retrieved October 3, 2012, from <http://www.zoo-merang.com/Survey/WEB22DUCPCQRTA>). A mentee must be a practicing ombudsman with less than one year experience in order to meet the necessary criteria for a match. The mentor must be a practicing ombudsman with at least three years experience with either member or associate member IOA designation.

Information gathered from the request form includes what type of organization the mentee works for (i.e. academic, corporate, government, etc.), the size of the organization, preferred language, and geographic region. There is also a section which allows the applicant to include any additional information which may be useful in determining the appropriate match.

Once the information is received by IOA and the data is confirmed, the IOA Mentoring Committee gets to work to make a match as soon as possible. Members of the committee schedule monthly phone conferences to receive the latest requests, review the list of potential mentors, and discuss possible matches based on the information listed in the application. The mentee-mentor match is for a one year commitment (although many relationships continue long after the 12 months) and therefore the committee tries to ensure solid selections.

Each committee member agrees to contact a portion of the new applicants shortly after the phone conference. The purpose is two-fold. One, to welcome the applicant to IOA and answer any initial questions and, two, to let them know that the committee has received their application and is attempting to find a mentor for them.

Soon after the contact has been made with the applicant, a member of the committee will contact a possible mentor to see if it is still a good time for them to mentor. If the answer is yes, he/she will be informed that there is a request for a mentor. The committee member will review the mentoring obligations, provide guidance and confirm that the mentor is willing and able to take on the responsibility. If the experienced ombudsman agrees to mentor, the committee member forwards this information on to IOA. IOA informs both the mentor and mentee of the match via e-mail and the process is complete.

Future of the Mentoring Program

“While the IOA Mentoring Program is intended for beginning ombuds, an expanded, second tier of mentorship would be beneficial, especially for sole practitioners. I felt a real loss when my mentorship expired. The mentorship program was a valuable resource for me in many ways.

— Charmaine B. Tomczyk, Faculty Ombuds

The concept of “mentoring” has been around for ages — since, at least the times of ancient Greece. It has entailed the communication of knowledge from a more experienced person to a less experienced person with the goal of assisting the less experienced person to develop professionally. (Bozeman & Feeney, October 2007). The mission and process of the IOA Mentoring Program is not much different than the mission and process of mentoring from ancient Greece but perhaps it should grow and develop just as we expect from our mentees. There are many ways in which the IOA Program can expand and develop — all dependent on the time and energy that IOA Member Volunteers can devote to the Program. The following section outlines some possible directions for the IOA Mentoring Program.

DEVELOPMENT OF MENTORS

As evidenced by testimonials sprinkled throughout this article, many mentees have had wonderful experiences with their mentors. But we don't hear from everyone, and once in a while we hear that a particular match isn't going so well. When this occurs we attempt to match the mentee up with a different mentor. The rapport the mentor and mentee develop is very important — perhaps the most important indicator of success of the mentoring relationship and when rapport does not develop between the mentor and mentee the match is not successful.

Currently, the Mentoring Program leaves the mentor and mentee to work their relationship out themselves as well as the process for the mentoring and the content. This leaves much to chance and we feel we can do more to assist the mentor to improve chances of success of the mentoring relationship. The Mentoring Program has discussed the following ideas for assisting IOA mentors.

- Suggest that the mentor and mentee share information about themselves during their first meeting (i.e., educational and career background; current ombuds situation and constituents; greatest challenges as new ombuds; family situation; experience with IOA, etc.).
- Provide tools — possibly checklists to assist the mentors conduct case review/reflection with a mentee.
- Provide timely topics of discussion for mentoring meetings such as listserv topics; news stories covered in the blog; and upcoming events like the IOA conference or professional development opportunities.

The IOA Mentoring Committee can also learn what research tells us about the factors that contribute to the success of the mentoring relationship so that we can better assist mentors and mentees.

ASPIRING OMBUDSMAN (AOS)

An increasing number of requests the Mentoring Program Committee receives is from aspiring ombudsmen (AOs) who are interested in receiving a Mentor who will talk with them about the profession and suggest strategies for finding an ombudsman position. Assisting AOs find a position is not the purpose of the IOA Mentoring Program so we have not made this type of request a priority and have not assisted these AOs — other than offering some information when we speak with the AO.

As educational programs in the field of conflict management and ombudsmanry grow and more people learn of the profession it is likely these types of requests will continue to grow. An option the Mentoring Program Committee would like to offer AO members is one or two conversations with an ombudsman, an ombudsman who is new to the profession may be the ideal, to discuss strategies and provide information about the profession.

CONSULTING OMBUDSMEN

Another request the Mentoring Program Committee is receiving comes from Consulting Ombudsmen who wish to be connected with a mentor. The needs of Consulting Ombudsmen are broader than discussions of cases and issues that arise in the profession. Consulting Ombudsmen are interested in receiving a Mentor to discuss marketing and setting up a practice as well as discussing the challenges and opportunities when working as an Ombudsman for an organization outside of that organization.

The Mentoring Program Committee Members would like to be in a position to facilitate a conversation between a novice consulting ombudsman and an experienced consulting ombudsman. The challenge here is the limited number of experienced consulting ombudsmen to place as a “limited time” Mentor.

The Mentoring Program Committee strives to find a mentor for all practicing ombudsmen so it is always difficult when a member meets all the criteria to receive a mentor and we don’t have a mentor to meet their needs.

GENERATION XERS AND MILLENNIALS

Never in the history of the United States have there been so many generations (i.e., Traditionalists — born before 1946; Baby Boomers — born between 1946 and 1964; Generation X — born between 1965 and 1976; and Millennials born between 1977 and 1997) working side by side. Meister and Willyerd discuss some of the workplace challenges and opportunities created by these multiple generations (e.g., different expectations, career needs, communication styles and learning preferences) all needing to be managed to engage and retain all employees (2010). Meister and Willyerd state that Millennials (the newest additions to the workforce) enjoy coaching and mentoring— not a surprise given that Millennials are very social. New forms of mentoring are being created to suit their styles and preferences.

In respect to communication, Millennials want information that is relevant to themselves and to their own role — also making mentoring a preferable mode of learning. Millennials are seamlessly connected to technology and they enjoy constant communication (Meister and Willyerd, 2010). Mentoring Programs are being developed that combine many of these characteristics to make them more effective and desirable to Millennials.

A model, referred to as mosaic mentoring, connects the mentee with multiple “mentors” (e.g., five or more experienced people). To engage Millennials, coaching may occur via the internet rather than through telephone or in-person meetings. A mentee could email a question or concern to multiple mentors (say five) and it is likely that with this many mentors, one of the mentors could email the mentee back immediately with feedback (referred to as “on-demand” mentoring). With this model, a challenge for ombuds may be the risk to confidentiality when questions and answers are submitted via the internet but could likely be solved by a technology savvy ombuds or technology expert.

Another model for mentoring is called “group mentoring” or learning circles. Group Mentoring is the opposite of mosaic mentoring. In group mentoring, one experienced ombudsman provides mentoring to many novice ombudsman via the internet. This model allows one mentor to facilitate an online mentoring relationship with mentees and between mentees. This may also be a very effective model as we all may recall getting most information from our peers — perhaps because we are less inhibited about asking questions and presenting concerns.

An additional benefit of this type of mentoring is that these learning circles may continue well past a year (the timeframe the “formal” mentoring relationship currently lasts). We have had mentees state that they felt a real loss when the mentoring year expired and they no longer felt comfortable contacting the mentor. We know that mentoring may be most valuable to the sole practitioners so these new models of mentoring may benefit the sole practitioner as well as the younger generation of ombuds.

Conclusion

Under Kerry's superb mentoring I was able once again to see the value of mentorship, but this time from the other side. It was a delightfully affirming experience. Please keep this Program going at IOA; I believe it is one of the most appealing and helpful services the organization provides.

— Ken Zahorski, University Ombudsman

The opportunity to tell the story — past, present, and future, of the IOA Mentoring Program is much appreciated! The Mentoring Program may be most valuable to the sole practitioner so it is very appropriate that this story is told in an edition of the IOA Journal devoted to this population within our community.

We acknowledge Vicky Brown for her commitment to the IOA Mentoring Program and thank all of the IOA Mentoring Program Committee volunteers. We also thank the official IOA Mentors and the countless number of unofficial mentors who have taken many of us under their wings and played a very important role in our professional growth and development.

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Transition in Office — A Study of a Transition in the ICANN Ombudsman Office

FRANK FOWLIE AND CHRIS LAHATTE

ABSTRACT

A feature of an Ombudsman is the appointment for a fixed term of years, or inevitable retirement from the office for the usual reasons of age or change. Inevitably, there must be a transition from the incumbent to the new appointee. This paper examines the process based on the actual transition within a sole practitioner office and evaluates the transition process, along with a lessons learned commentary.

KEY WORDS

Ombudsman, Transition, Training, Knowledge transfer, Successor, Induction

Introduction

The idea for the study came from the transition of Dr. Frank Fowlie, the former Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) Ombudsman to Chris LaHatte, newly appointed by the ICANN board in July 2011. Dr. Fowlie was the founding Ombudsman and had been appointed in 2004. He had continued in office until February 2011, when his term of appointment ended. In the period following Dr. Fowlie's departure, Herb Waye, who had acted as the Adjunct Ombudsman, acted as the Interim Ombudsman. The ICANN Ombudsman is regarded as an executive ombudsman.¹

The ICANN Office of the Ombudsman, like many Ombudsman operations across the world, is a sole practitioner shop. While Herb Waye acted as the Adjunct Ombudsman under Dr. Fowlie, and continues to do so for Chris, his role is to act as a backup resource, and he is not involved in the day to day operations of dispute resolution within ICANN. Thus, the Ombudsman is really the source of corporate knowledge and history for the Office. With the first Ombudsman departing

before the hiring of the new Ombudsman, both the Office of the Ombudsman and the ICANN Organization faced serious issues about the handover of knowledge and information from one to the other.

ICANN is a unique organisation. It was incorporated under the Clinton Administration to manage the Domain Name System as a non-governmental organization, and sits at the very hub of the Internet. The company is a not for profit enterprise set up under California law. Members of the Board of Directors are selected through a process of selection from a Nominating Committee, and by election through various 'pillar' bodies. ICANN stakeholders come from a very diverse range of governmental, corporate, not-for-profit and individual groups; and ICANN has a multi-stakeholder governance model. There is a very conscious drive to internationalise the company, and despite the United States origin, the stakeholders are truly international. The corporate culture therefore, and the stakeholder culture, both must recognise the international nature of the organisation, and the respect and recognition of diversity of race, culture and opinion.²

There was, heretofore, no established precedent or procedure for organising the Ombudsman transition within the organisation. Dr. Fowlie had come from a background rich with experience in dispute resolution services and offices of a Canadian Ombudsman³ and Chris LaHatte came from a legal background with practice as a barrister and mediator⁴. He had no prior experience as an Ombudsman. To give further background, brief biographies are footnoted.

There were additional challenges to the transition, because the ICANN Head Office is located in Los Angeles, California, and Dr. Fowlie resides in British Columbia, Canada and Chris LaHatte resides in Wellington, New Zealand. After Chris LaHatte was appointed, they had a number of discussions about how to achieve the transition and agreed that the appropriate place to do so was at the headquarters of ICANN in Marina Del Rey, a suburb of Los Angeles.

There were some obvious issues about learning how to achieve the transition for the role. For example, a case management system is used to run the Office of the Ombudsman cases, ICANN has its own knowledge management systems, and ICANN itself is a complex multi-stakeholder organisation. In addition, while Chris LaHatte has a long background in law and mediation, he is a novice Ombudsman and needed guidance and training for the role and where to obtain further training as needed. Dr. Fowlie therefore developed a plan to develop such training and an introduction to ICANN, in conjunction with the Human Relations Director and other senior staff at ICANN.

The training plan, therefore, needed to take into account both knowledge transfer and guidance as to where information and training could be obtained. In developing the plan, Dr. Fowlie needed to be aware that, at the time of drafting the plan, he did not know the gaps in Chris's knowledge. So, the plan needed to be flexible and take into account the need to identify the gaps and the appropriate way to provide the specific training, as well as the more general overall introduction to the organization and its business.

The transition of knowledge from one Ombudsman to the successor

It is likely that the records of an internet based Ombudsman will be kept in some sort of file management system, which also means that there will be substantial electronic records. If the Ombudsman is moving into an organisation, it goes without saying that new Ombudsman will need training in any new or particular programs used by the organisation and of course access to any online databases. There will, of course, be a certain amount of paper files, and there is a need to explain how they are organised and the filing system.

The needs of both Ombudsmen in the transfer process

Dr. Fowlie invested many years on the original setup and creation of the office. Therefore, he had a personal interest to ensure that his work was continued and built upon by his successor. Chris LaHatte, as a novice Ombudsman, required as much training as was possible, and guidance as to the further training opportunities he should look for, both in the transition stage and beyond. There needed to be an efficient transfer of knowledge, but there was also an acknowledgment that there was a relatively limited amount of time to achieve this. The transition training, therefore, needed to be intensive and cover extensive amounts of information.

A consideration of organizational needs

ICANN wanted an efficient transfer of the work of the office, so that Chris LaHatte could commence his Ombudsman work as quickly as possible. It was important, therefore, to work closely with the Human Relations Director, who normally handles the intake of new staff at executive level, and assist with meeting key personnel to brief Chris LaHatte on ICANN and its operations.

The management of the transition

Dr. Fowlie prepared for the transition by drafting a training and meeting schedule. He prepared the draft in conjunction with the ICANN Human Relations Director, Steven Antonoff, who assisted with resources and liaison with staff members who would train Chris LaHatte in aspects of the organization and its business. They considered such a schedule essential so that the actual handover could be completed in a personal fashion. The schedule involved listing and liaising with key personnel so that there could be meetings with Dr. Fowlie and Chris LaHatte to discuss the various functions within the organisation and how the transition would affect all of them. It also involved training in administrative matters such as the budget process and the arrangements for expenses, travel, and other usual employment matters. Other key personnel reflected the multi-stakeholder model of ICANN, so that Chris LaHatte could be introduced to the key players within the various pillars of the organisation. A typical example was that of Compliance,

who administer the Registrars and the key Registrar Accreditation Agreement, and who manage contractual compliance with the Registrars concerning the Agreement. Historically, this has been a fruitful area for complaints to the Ombudsman.

Issues in relation to continuing role and protection of role in transition

When there is a change in the Office of an Ombudsman, there needs to be a clear process for appointment of the replacement. The office itself may be seen to be vulnerable during this period, as during the transition period the outgoing officeholder may be seen as toothless, and the new appointee may be adjusting to the environment and becoming familiar with the community which he or she serves. An Organisational or Executive Ombudsman may be particularly at risk if there are political moves to adjust the terms of service or the appointment. There must be a transparent and open process, but also one which takes into account the vulnerabilities referred to. The credibility of the Office may be affected during the transition period and it is important therefore to have continuous service available.

This article is written from the perspectives of both Ombudsmen, and our hope is that our experiences will be of benefit to other Ombudsmen operations as they look at ways to construct smooth and beneficial handovers.

DR. FRANK FOWLIE:

Chris LaHatte got it right when he talked about personal investment in the Office of the Ombudsman, and my desire to set the next Ombudsman up for success in his role. When I started as the ICANN Ombudsman, the Office was really nothing more than a Bylaw, and a batch of ideas. In an international organization such as ICANN, participants, stakeholders, and staff come from across the world, with varying views on governance, and in particular on oversight mechanisms such as the Ombudsman. Some wanted the ICANN Ombudsman to be like an Inspector General who was implicated in almost every aspect of the corporation's business; while others thought the role should be a complaint registry — only able to tell management or the Board of Directors about the existence of an issue, but unable to do anything about it.

Over time, the Office produced an Ombudsman Framework, and a Results Based Accountability Framework, which provided context for the operations in an 'Executive Ombudsman' model. The Board of Directors ratified these documents, and set the course for the Ombudsman to receive complaints, use Alternative Dispute Resolution tools to seek positive outcomes, to investigate maladministration, and to make recommendations for change. It was very much a proper Executive Ombudsman operation.

However, one factor made this a unique operation. The ICANN Ombudsman is an Ombudsman's shop in a global organization that, by its very definition, worked in a technology based — or on-line — world. The Office of the Ombudsman, therefore, had to be a virtual one, and the first of its kind. While the Office built itself into an Ombudsman institution, it also had to create itself in the world of Online Dispute Resolution (ODR.). I was fortunate to be quickly accepted into the ODR community, and the Office enjoyed a great relationship with the National Centre for Technology and Dispute Resolution at the University of Massachusetts — Amherst.

As with any business entity with a long experience, the ICANN Office of the Ombudsman built relationships with many others. These ranged from the ICANN staff (in particular the Corporate Secretary, John Jeffrey) to government officials, ombudsman associations, service providers, individual community member, to special relationships such as the Strauss Centre for Dispute Resolution at Pepperdine University. With respect to the latter, the Office of the Ombudsman had acted as an externship host to over 20 Masters of Conflict Resolution learners, making it the most frequent extern partner with America's leading dispute resolution program.

ICANN is a unique bottom up, consensus driven, multi-stakeholder organization. Its stakeholders range in influence from the White House to individual internet users from across the globe. Across that panoply of influence there were parties who were more supportive of the Executive Ombudsman role, and others less so. Some viewed the Office as giving added value to the organization, while others took it as an affront to their perception of individual freedoms. Frankly, some of the community members who accessed the Office of the Ombudsman were simply querulous complainants, while others were extremely genuine in their desire to engage ICANN using out of court dispute resolution techniques.

Chris LaHatte was right in the introduction, I was invested in the success of the Office, and I wanted him to be well equipped for the job he was going to be facing. So, the questions before me included: How much time will ICANN invest in training and in a mentoring process; what does Chris LaHatte need to know; and when can we possibly align our schedules and geographic locations to get it done? Secondly, which one of us had the ability to work with the organization to deal with the first and third questions?

CHRIS LAHATTE:

I had the advantage of experience in electronic case management through my work in litigation, which in New Zealand, enjoys some support from the legal community. My writing on legal procedure is also useful in considering targets and time management issues. I also found that my litigation experience in areas such as judicial review cases had a direct correlation to Ombudsman practice, as the concepts of fairness and delay are common features. But, Dr. Fowlie correctly identified me as a novice to Ombudsmanship practice, and I needed to use my partial knowledge and Dr. Fowlie's training to identify my gaps in knowledge. So the big issue for me was to find out what I did not know!

We then had to create a system of handover to include the introduction to Ombudsman practice, where to seek further advice, mentoring and training, as well as understanding the complex organisation which is ICANN. It quickly became obvious that I needed to discard my system of thinking like a lawyer to approach problems. The mediator skills are much more relevant, and application of law is seldom useful in complaints to this Office. Fairness itself really transcends the law, which often imposes unfair results, and so I had to change my way of problem solving as a lawyer.

So, starting on the process of understanding ICANN was the first step, and the programme designed by Dr. Fowlie was critical. I needed to understand the organization and its business so that I could hit the ground running. I had looked at the ICANN website prior to being appointed, and tried to understand how it all worked, but, the abstract and the reality are of course very different. Dr. Fowlie's schedule included introductions to as many ICANN Executives as we could fit in, so they could meet me and more importantly, explain their roles within the structure to me. They were, without exception, patient and welcoming and formed valuable contact points for the future. As the Ombudsman, I would need to work with them, and establishing a personal relationship was something which Dr. Fowlie identified as critical to the launch of my new role. In any transition those personal relationships mean that the new person can form the essential personal contacts when practicing in the role.

The more mechanical tasks of learning how to use the ICANN software and the case management system were important; but they just needed an introduction and study. Nonetheless, to be able to integrate into the Office, these items take some of the allocated time to ease the transfer. To anyone coming from outside ICANN, it is essential. Because a new Ombudsman may typically come from outside, especially in a sole practitioner office, this will be part of any such transition. It may be obvious, as with other aspects, but does need anticipation and tailoring to meet the skill set of the incumbent.

The anticipation of training needs in a wider sense is something to be tailored to the skill set of the incumbent. As I had no Ombudsman background, I relied heavily on Dr. Fowlie to suggest the basics, and fit the training into the 2 week schedule, and then anticipate what I should then look into for more training. I had little idea what was needed except for a general sense of needing much information and gaining this quickly. Dr. Fowlie was unsure of the level of training as it was all New Zealand based and no doubt different from the Canadian models he was familiar with. We needed the discussion so we could come to common ground on the gaps and needs.

DR. FRANK FOWLIE:

Once the details had been worked out about meeting Chris LaHatte in Marina Del Rey in August, my job became the design of a training program that would arm Chris LaHatte for his new job. In my mind, the training would be made up of 5 key areas: Ombudsmanship; Administration for the Ombudsman; Understanding ICANN's business; Being the ICANN Ombudsman; and conducting Ombudsman orientations for staff and the community.

- 1. Ombudsmanship:** As Chris LaHatte is a new Ombudsman, it was critical to give him a solid orientation to the profession. We had a wide range to cover, from defining a basis of fairness to Ombudsman 101. The training was to be delivered uniquely by Dr. Fowlie.
- 2. Administration for the Ombudsman:** This included topics such as the transfer of business contacts, to the filing of expense claims, to physical security. The training was to be delivered by both Dr. Fowlie and other staff.
- 3. Understanding ICANN's business:** ICANN is the agency that administers the domain name system for the Internet. It was necessary to give Chris LaHatte a strong understanding of what ICANN does, who its stakeholders are, how it is governed, and what issues are on its horizon. At the time of the handover, ICANN was preparing to expand the top level domain by potentially up to 500 – 1000 new extensions (i.e. .eco, .gay, .sport etc). This business activity could have immense impact on the Office of the Ombudsman. In addition, the topic demanded that many staff members provide their expertise in the orientation.
- 4. Being the ICANN Ombudsman:** We had to cover a lot of nuts and bolts of doing Ombudsmanship at ICANN. The list included things such as the case management system, providing an Ombudsman office at ICANN Meetings, and working from a remote home office.
- 5. Conducting Orientations:** A critical activity for the Ombudsman is to conduct orientations to new staff, stakeholders, and the outside community. Each new ICANN employee receives an orientation from the Ombudsman on the dispute resolution within the organization, and the Ombudsman is frequently called upon to give orientations to others within and outside of the agency.

We had two weeks to accomplish a very ambitious agenda.

CHRIS LAHATTE:

It became obvious that although we had two weeks to achieve the knowledge transfer and training, that the allocated time was insufficient. However, we were able to rely on the contacts made, and Dr. Fowlie has been a most useful and patient mentor in the succeeding period, as has been Herb Waye, my ongoing adjunct. Ideally, there should have been a transition with an overlap, but as we had a 7 month hiatus with Herb minding the shop, there were some problems. It is my view that the transition should ideally be closer to the end of the first Ombudsman's term, with a contemporaneous transfer. The logistics of the appointment process obviated this unfortunately.

What Worked and Didn't Work

I thought that the training process facilitated by Dr. Fowlie worked well, subject to the time limitations imposed. Ideally, several sessions with a gap to absorb the knowledge, and then apply the training practically may be better.

The staff introduction process, so very vital to connecting with the organisation, went smoothly, and would be an essential part of any Ombudsman transition. I would regard staff contact as fundamental to any organization, and while perhaps obvious, this aspect should be at the center of any planning, and could require some notice, especially for busy senior executives or officials.

What Lessons did we learn that we can pass along to other Ombudsman programs?

We think it is important to note that there are many, many Ombudsman programs where the incumbent is a sole practitioner. This article is written not just as a narrative of our own experiences, but also to provide some guidance to colleagues who may be transitioning their offices to a new Ombudsman.

DR. FRANK FOWLIE:

From my point of view, there are two key elements. First, there has to be a plan; and second there has to be organizational buy-in to support a smooth handover.

When developing a plan for the handover, the incumbent has to take a lot of things into consideration. For example, an employee in the same organization who is promoted into the Ombudsman role will have different training needs than someone from outside of the organization. Someone who is already fulfilling an Ombudsman role will have different needs than a new Ombudsman.

From my perspective, when developing the plan, a key function that has to be passed along is the corporate culture of the Ombudsman's Office; which, when it is a sole practitioner is often influenced by the personality of the incumbent. If you have two generations of Ombudsman with different personalities, how do you organize the transition so that all of the expected and public features are transitioned? In our case, a key factor in transferring the culture of the Office was in developing Chris' capacity to do new staff briefings. He had a very short time to become an expert on his new Office, and he did well at mastering the knowledge.

In planning for an orientation other key factors include an orientation to the business and to the culture of the organization. The new Ombudsman, to be set up for success in their role, needs to be able to grasp quickly and effectively what the organization does as its prime functions, and how it achieves its goals. Critically, the new Ombudsman needs to be able to operate within the organization as a single person office, and getting full briefings on administration issues, expense claim submission, telecommunications policies, etc are very necessary to success.

Finally, a critical factor in handing over the Office to a new Ombudsman includes ensuring that the history of the Office is passed along. The new Ombudsman needs to have a good understanding of how and why the Office was chartered, how buy in in the community was established, and where the friction points are. The new Ombudsman needs to be able to quickly assimilate that historical view, with an understanding of the current business of the organization to be able to foresee where his services may be needed in the future. For Chris LaHatte, this was critical, as he was assuming his role just as ICANN administers the largest expansion of Top Level Domains. Hundreds of applications are expected; millions of dollars will be invested, and will be at risk; and he'll be in the middle of sorting out some very powerful issues.

Organizational buy in is also very important in the hand over. In our case, the organization paid for me to come back to provide a two week orientation, and allowed me to schedule in staff from other work areas to complete the briefings. I posit that it would have been helpful to Chris LaHatte for there to have been an additional mentoring period, even if done online⁵. The more the organization is onboard to have the Ombudsman operating as independently as possible, as quickly as possible, the better. The corollary to this would be a word of warning to new Ombudsmen who do not get an organizational buy in for their training, it could mean that the organization is either disinterested in the Ombudsman role, or may be trying to subterfuge it.

CHRIS LAHATTE:

As the incumbent, I get the last word. After a year in the office I can now reflect on the transition and consider what we achieved. While most Ombuds offices spend much time on metrics and reports, and analysis of the work being undertaken, succession planning seems to be left as either too hard or unlikely. But usually contracts for an ombudsman are finite for a term of years, and we must be ready to achieve the transfer of the office with minimum disruption and

continued service to our visitors. I would advise Ombudsmen, especially those in sole practitioner offices, to carefully consider how they are going to make sure their successors are set up for success in their work,

BROAD TOPIC

ISSUES FOR TRAINING

Administration

- Creating Budget — Operations Plan
- Procedures for claiming travel and other expenses
- Technical Support for computers, phones, website, Blog etc.
- Planning Travel
- Getting business cards — use of Braille
- Transfer of Outlook cards for primary contacts
- Recording Leave and “in travel” status
- Physical Security for Office, materials, and your person
- Creating and ordering publications
- Identifying key personnel for Admin matters

Ombudsmanship

- Ombudsman basics or Ombudsman 101
- Ombudsman Associations and roles
- Online Dispute Resolution — ODR. Forum
- National Centre for Technology and Dispute Resolution (annual funding for) — NCTDR.
- Memberships in various groups and associations of benefit
- Ombudsman training courses for new Ombudsman
- Relationship with Pepperdine University
- Defining the basis of fairness
- 3 Pillars — Independence, Confidentiality, and Neutrality
- Defining Ombudsman jurisdiction
- Conferences of note to attend as speaker or delegate

**Being the ICANN
Ombudsman**

- Case Management System
- Ombudsman Web site and Blog
- Outreach activities and materials
- Peers and contacts to get the work done with

Ombudsman Framework
Results Based Management Accountability Framework
Bylaw V
Working with tech support from a distance
Adjunct Ombudsman
Attending ICANN Meetings and setting up an Office
Other Dispute mechanisms — Independent Review Panel, etc
Writing case reports and annual reports
Work weeks abroad — Brussels and Sydney Offices
Dealing with criticism, the community, and querulous complainants
Participating in the NCTDR. Cyberweek and annual Forum
Process for conducting and upgrading staff orientations
Handover of open cases
Promotional materials — pens, notebooks etc
Using evaluation tools i.e. Survey Monkey
Ongoing evaluations
Issues with and use of translators

**Understanding the
ICANN organization
and business**

Domain Name System 101
Top Level Domains and New Top Level Domains
Internationalized Domain Names
Legal Department and its relationship with the Ombudsman
The Role of the Corporate Secretary
Compliance Programs
The Executive Team
The Board of Directors, the Board process, and Board support
Dealing with Media, communications, and public relations
The multi stakeholder environment
Public Participation model
Human Resources and administrative support
ICANN Meetings
Policy Development Process
Administrative review process required under the bylaws
Nominating Committee

Government Relations — including IGO's
Uniform Domain Name Resolution Policy and UDR.P Providers
Cross Cultural Issues
Organizational Effectiveness
Registries
Registrars, and the Registrar Liaison Team

**Conducting Orientations
to the Office of the
Ombudsman**

Train new Ombudsman to be able to conduct Orientations
Mentor in live orientation exercise with feedback

ENDNOTES

¹ See <http://www.icann.org/en/help/ombudsman/program> where In Dr Fowlie's Doctoral Dissertation, this is discussed at page 30, together with comments from John Zinnser who evaluated the office.

² <http://www.icann.org/en/about/welcome>

³ Dr. Frank Fowlie is the Ombudsman at the International Organization for Migration, Geneva; and is CEO of internetombudsman.biz. Frank was the inaugural Ombudsman at the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers. ICANN is the agency which administers the global domain name system which serves as the backbone for the Internet. He served as the Ombudsman from November 2004 to January 2011.

⁴ Chris LaHatte is the ICANN Ombudsman and reports directly to the ICANN Board. He is available to the ICANN Community for complaints about delay and unfairness between ICANN and the supporting organisations. His background is as a lawyer in New Zealand and overseas, and as a mediator and dispute resolution specialist.

⁵ In any case, we seem to have done this without working it through the organization.

Improvisation, Intuition and Spontaneity: A New Approach for the Ombuds Trainer

ADAM BARAK KLEINBERGER

ABSTRACT

This article presents a new approach to training sessions delivered by ombudsmen utilizing improvisation. Improv involves using impulses in a natural and spontaneous way to provide satisfying and often unexpected outcomes. By incorporating improv, learners build skill, stay engaged and are able to utilize their intuition in an experiential learning opportunity. The origins and context of improv and its use in conflict resolution training are described. A detailed, practical example of a training session focusing on the skill of listening is presented using this new approach.

KEY WORDS

Ombudsman, Improvisation, Training, Listening, Conflict, Skill-building

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Introduction

Many ombudsman offices offer training to their constituents. Training may focus on conflict resolution, negotiation, communication, difficult conversations or a host of other topics members of the organization need. These sessions are an opportunity not only to teach learners information and skills on a variety of topics, but also a way for the ombuds to demonstrate their own expertise, foster trust with individuals, and increase visibility of the ombuds office, while serving as a model of civil behavior.

In many cases, ombuds use traditional methods of instruction including lecture, literature and role-play. These approaches offer learners the chance to practice skills, such as active listening, and to develop techniques for dealing with difficult people. They also afford a better understanding of how to manage conflict. However, when I speak with fellow ombuds trainers, they continually seek new approaches to increase effectiveness and interest in their sessions.

Since one of the objectives is to build skill, it is important to keep key questions in mind when designing the curriculum. First, how can trainers train for a single skill that is part of a network of skills? Further, how can they add more practice-oriented exercises to their training that can be used to build skill? Finally, as teachers and trainers frequently ask, “How can I keep the learners more interested?”

The most effective training sessions allow a skill to come alive for the class. When this is the case, students are more likely to use the skill in their own work. Courses often cover skills such as reframing, attentive listening, maintaining neutrality, using clear language, clarifying interests, brainstorming, facilitating dialogue and empathy. Still, many ombuds share a difficulty in generating practice-oriented activities that can be used with learners to help them master these critical skills. Typically, the “practice” component of the lesson consists of role-plays where learners have a chance to act out a given scenario.

While the learners may have a chance to use the targeted skills in role-plays, it is often difficult to isolate that skill in the simulation. For example, in a negotiation role-play as the buyer of a house, learners use a host of different skills. They may reframe, listen, tease out interests, evaluate offers, perspective-take and defend against hardball tactics. In fact, many of these skills are being employed simultaneously.

When we listen, for example, we are also taking visual cues from the speaker. We look for emphasis coming from hand gestures and we notice where the speaker is looking when they make their points. As Benjamin Franklin (n.d.) said, “Remember not only to say the right thing in the right place, but far more difficult still, to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment.” Knowing when to be silent and allow another voice to fill the space is a skill unto itself.

When we choose to speak, we are simultaneously listening for other cues. One of these signals is whether or not the person understands what we have said. During a negotiation role-play, it is easy to lose track of the individual skill of listening. Moreover, it is still thornier to practice any of these skills independently of the other activities and “moves” that occur in the role-play.

Improvisation holds the answer to this dilemma. Improvisation, or improv, is the ability to create something without prior preparation. At its best, improv involves one or more people using their instincts and impulses in a natural and spontaneous way to provide satisfying and often unexpected outcomes.

Improv also differs from a skit, in which the scenario is predefined and the words previously written down. Skits may involve two instructors in a scene where learners watch the action. For the solo-practitioner, the options include delivering a prepared monologue or suddenly enlisting a volunteer. Working with a learner, who is not warmed-up, on scripted material is a tall task even for the experienced trainer. Improv, however, is cooperative, and allows for deep participation by everyone, often in concert.

My background in performance, work experience and qualitative research on the effectiveness of using improv in training, led me to advocate for its use as productive and worthwhile. Utilizing improv is an opportunity for the ombuds trainer to add a new robustness and interest to his or her sessions and to increase the skill level of the learners.

Certainly, more attention needs to be devoted in order to study the effectiveness of improv when compared with more traditional approaches. The use of improv as a new approach may not fit with every client or workgroup that contracts with the ombuds to receive a training session. There may be any number of limitations including room size, number of learners, trainer experience and cultural considerations. Other pre-existing factors, such as the level of trust and conflict within the group, must also be weighed.

Still, the use of improv has much to offer. There is a plethora of competencies fundamental to the training sessions that ombudsmen conduct. Several of these are identical to the competencies on which improvisers focus to improve their craft. These include listening, acceptance, thinking on one's feet, creativity, working successfully with another person, commitment to solving a problem, not being directive or forcing outcomes and focusing on relationships. Thus, existing improv exercises are directly transferable to training sessions offered by ombuds.

Viola Spolin, an American originator and innovator of improvisational exercises for actors, points out that experiencing involves an intellectual, physical and intuitive level and that of these, it is so often the intuitive that is ignored (1963, p. 3). Engaging intuition draws on "unhampered knowledge beyond the sensory equipment," (p.384). It allows the learner to experience the situation for him or herself, at a level of involvement that is difficult to match. The experience is personal to each learner. Moments of "revelation" (p.384) may be unlocked and insight gained.

Using improv brings with it the ability to practice one skill at a time. For example, improv exercises can be designed to focus on listening while everything else is isolated. In this way, the learner is able to build their mastery of a specific technique or task.

Improv is the ultimate spontaneous exercise. The moment that is generated by the learners has never existed before and can never be repeated. Indeed, improv allows the learner to have a "free moment of self expression," (Spolin, 1963, p.392), a spontaneous experience that often times leads to breakthroughs in technique or understanding of the skill being presented.

Learners stay engaged with the lesson at all times. The approach is effective, translatable and interesting, not only for the learners, but also for the trainer.

In order to give context to this new approach, and in consideration to those ombuds not familiar with improv, a brief review is presented of the origins of improvisation in the performing arts and of its use in conflict resolution. Subsequently, for ombuds trainers who seek to add this approach to their own training sessions, an example is provided that concentrates on listening, one skill central to so many of the different training offerings by ombuds.

The Performing Arts — Improvisation

While improvisation has been employed by various actors and troupes and in many times and places, nowhere was the synergy between the two more natural and influential than in **Commedia Dell'arte**. Beginning in the 16th century, troupes using makeshift stages traveled the countryside of Italy performing humorous stories centered on stock characters without the use of a script (Smith, 1912). Their themes and story lines were universal. They included subjects like love, jealousy and ambition, but the portrayal of those stories was completed without the preparation of traditional theater. Actors would play off each other and did not know where the story was going beforehand. The stock characters included representations of the soldier, servant, doctor, lover and others. Exploiting the audience's ability to identify with these archetypes is at the root of modern improvisation and clowning.

Commedia Dell'arte has influenced many significant artists in modern times. Dario Fo, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1997 (Dario Fo-Biography, n.d.), drew on the traditions of Commedia in his acting, directing and playwriting. Antonio Fava, a colleague of Fo, started a world-renowned school dedicated to Commedia Dell'arte (Rudlin & Crick, 2001).

THEATER OF THE OPPRESSED. New artists moved further into the world of improvisation, developing their own style and schools. Augusto Boal developed "Theater of the Oppressed" to push his contention that governments use theater to help rule over people (Boal, 1979). His work helped to outline connections between real life and theater by the use of "psycho-dramas" and participatory theater. By improvising scenes, sometimes from real life events, those who have been oppressed are sometimes able to achieve an objective understanding of the experiences they have had. This stemmed from Brecht's theory of detachment or the "Verfremdungseffekt," translated as, "seeing from a distance, without involving oneself," (Boal 2006, p.73). It allowed someone to become detached about a personal situation over which they are unable to gain perspective. His work has been influential in the use of theater in education and in drama therapy. For example, Jonathan Fox built on this work and started Playback Theater, which uses dialogue about psycho-dramatic improvisations to foster new understandings for all involved (Fox, 2004).

AMERICAN TRADITIONS IN IMPROVISATION. Viola Spolin created another major step in the development of modern American improvisation. She developed structures or "theater games" that players used to guide their improvisations (Spolin, 1986). Initially, actors used these structures in rehearsal to help them better their craft. Rules about what each improviser could or could not do were used to set up a framework in which a scene with a story could develop. By focusing on attentive listening and genuine acceptance of the other players' offers (ideas by a player regarding the characters, plot or even the layout of a room), Spolin spawned a new style of improvisation that remains with us today.

Spolin contends that theater game workshops are useful in helping students to better concentrate and problem-solve (Spolin, 1986). Theater games help participants to be more creative and

to develop freedom of thinking. Intuition about social interaction is developed in a low stakes environment. Feedback is immediate, once the game has ended. Specific games are geared toward skills, like listening. Theater games are defined by the principle that no one knows what the next line or action will be. Players need to work together and relinquish control in order to be successful at resolving or exposing the “conflict” that is almost always the basis for a successful scene (Spolin, 1963).

ENGLISH TRADITIONS IN IMPROVISATION. In England, Keith Johnstone was doing some of the same work through different methods. His focus on masks, status and narratives helped spur actors into working towards a new way of preparation and production. Johnstone cites the work of W.R. Bion’s *Experience in Groups* (1968), in which Bion describes groups where “everyone attacks the status of everyone else while pretending to be friendly” (Johnstone, 1979, p.35). Johnstone looks to theater games in order to play out these “status transactions” in a way that is “...flipped over from acting as a competitive group into acting as a co-operative one” (p.35). Johnstone goes on to illuminate the gap between behavior and conscious intention. Often times in a group, a person thinks she is acting friendly when in fact she is acting “hostile,” as Johnstone notes from his work in one of Bion’s groups (p.36).

Between Spolin and Johnstone, we now have the basis for the modern world of improvisation that has fostered “Improv Houses” or multi-use theaters and schools that exist in almost every major city in the country. These schools are not only popular among actors, but also with executives, who flock to improv courses to improve their ability to think on their feet. Corporate team leaders bring entire divisions to improv courses to cultivate team building. Introverts seeking assistance with interpersonal interactions attend classes to give them skills to deal social anxieties.

Conflict Resolution and Improv

The overriding principles of improvisation seem to be shared with the world of conflict resolution, yet very little has been written making this link. Creativity, acceptance, mutuality, risk-taking, trust, awareness, collaboration and practice are indeed areas where the two fields are in concert (Gerardi, 2001). Gerardi also presents the idea that improv games can help improve a mediator’s skill level. She explains that, “Practicing technique and playing games to develop the skills necessary for releasing creativity can enhance the ability of any mediator” (2001).

Negotiation and Improv

More recently, the topic of negotiation and improv is drawing attention. Professional associations are offering courses such as “Improv for Lawyers” (Improv for Lawyers, n.d.). Similar to Gerardi’s work, these classes use exercises based on maxims from the improv world such as saying, “yes, and...” instead of “no” (Balachandra, 2006) to improve negotiation skills.

Recognizing a party’s offer in a mediation session is similar to recognizing an offer in the world of improvisation (Balachandra et al., 2005). The mediator, or in the case of improv, the player, needs to be open to offers by listening intently and having a willingness to be creative about what might come next (similar to brainstorming). A mediator, or any other conflict resolution professional, must choose when to use certain moves in one’s repertoire (Moore 2003, p. 428) and understand which particular move to fall back on in time of need. That choice of which move to use, at which time, is not just one of skill, but one of improvisation.

Example Training Module: Listening

Warm-ups

In a traditional ombuds training session, “ice-breakers” are used to shake off learners’ natural nervousness and increase their familiarity with each other and the instructor. Ice-breakers are usually unrelated to the focus of the lesson. In improv, these initial activities or “warm-ups,” are connected to the skill that is at the center of the training session.

Warm-ups are designed to get the blood of the group flowing and start to build synergy and trust. Sometimes they are funny so everyone has a chance to know that it is safe to laugh at each other and at oneself. Warm-ups can be exclusively vocal or exceptionally active. They can even be silent and used to help the group focus. Most importantly, warm-ups not only prepare the group for learning, but also begin the lesson, in this case, listening.

When using improv in an experiential training session, the introductory activities are even more important because learners will be sharing in activities that are unfamiliar to them. They may be standing up in front of each other, involved in a make-believe scene or moving around the space in a way to which they are unaccustomed. The trainer should spend a generous amount of time on activities that are simple to learn and allow for immediate participation, while still addressing the predetermined skill area.

A challenge for the trainer in this type of experiential training is building trust in the group. Ensuring the group is comfortable enough with each other to take chances, risk making mistakes or even looking silly is paramount. To address this, the trainer should establish guidelines at the beginning of the session to establish a safe environment, one where the learners can experiment without judgment, and provide salient feedback to each other. The guidelines for feedback should consist of making sure that care and empathy are used when talking about each other’s work.

GLANCE AND ACKNOWLEDGE (WARM-UP)

By reducing the communication in the group to a single clear offer and acceptance, each learner continuously finds permission to move spots while standing in a circle.

Round 1: Players form a circle. Player A begins by glancing at another player in the circle, Player B. Once their gaze is returned, Player A asks, "May I have your spot?" Player B responds, "Yes you may," and nods. Player A begins a slow walk toward their new spot. Meanwhile, Player B immediately looks to one of the other players in the circle, Player C. Once their gaze is met, Player B similarly asks, "May I have your spot?" Player C responds, "Yes you may," and nods.

A player may not move until they have asked and received permission to move to a new spot. Therefore, when a player has given up their spot, and the new resident is approaching, they will be forced to seek that same acknowledgement from another player. If the group makes a mistake, and two players occupy the same spot, gently restart the warm-up and play until the group is proficient.

Round 2: In this version, the warm-up is played silently. Instead of asking for a spot, players merely glance, making firm eye contact, to request a spot, and nod to accept a request.

EXPLANATION AND DISCUSSION POINTS

The warm-up is a continuous series of offers, acknowledgments and agreements. Each player asks for a new spot. The answer is always yes. In order to be successful in Round 2, the group must listen to the silent chatter of offers continually being conveyed. Once a player arrives at a new spot, they immediately turn around to see where the silent conversation is being expressed. Players learn to listen with their eyes and with their intuition for where in the circle the soundless conversation is taking place. By expanding one's awareness to who is in the group, what they need, and when they need it, a more complete form of listening is realized.

Exercises

Trainers use skill-building exercises in order for learners to practice, model, mimic or explore a skill. Improv exercises are an instructor-led, group activity designed to work on a specific skill or set of skills. From my experience with groups not familiar with this type of training, exercises that focus on a single skill at a time work best. The benefits are more transparent to the student and the learners are able to engage fully with every aspect of that skill. The lessons they learn do not diffuse in an assortment of directions. They are concrete and repeatable.

MANY CONVERSATIONS AT ONCE (EXERCISE)

This exercise pairs learners in the activity of telling a story and listening to a story. It was modified from a classic exercise dedicated to refining awareness called Contrapuntal Argument (Spolin, 1963, p.180).

Round 1: Players pair up. Pairs should be well spaced from other pairs. The trainer announces that one player in each pair will tell a story about a certain topic. Pairs should designate who will be the Storyteller and who will be the Listener. The trainer explains that in a moment, the topic for storytelling will be revealed and once the pairs hear “Go!” they should begin. The Storyteller is instructed to go on, without pause, and in rich detail until they hear “Stop!”

The trainer announces a single topic (e.g. what the player ate for breakfast, the last time they bought a car, a memorable birthday) and says, “Go!” After a minute, the trainer announces, “Stop!” The trainer then instructs the Listener in each pair to recite the story back to the Storyteller, including every detail they can remember. Once the instructor gives the pairs a couple of minutes accomplish this, the instructor restarts the exercise with the pairs switching their roles. Each time the exercise is restarted, the instructor gives a brand new topic for the story.

Round 2: In this round, the pairs repeat the exercise with both players telling a story simultaneously. Each player in the pair is the Storyteller and the Listener at the same time. The trainer announces a new topic and says, “Go!” Each player simultaneously tells a detailed story to his or her partner. After one minute, the trainer announces, “Stop!”

The instructor gathers everyone together in one group for a discussion. With the instructor facilitating, learners take turns reciting as much as they remember from their partner’s story, attempting to provide abundant detail where possible. The player who is the actual owner of the story helps their partner along and can make mention of details that were forgotten, distorted or incorrect. At this point, players often ask for Round 2 to be repeated. Repeat and come back together as one group to debrief.

Round 3: Other permutations of the exercise can be accomplished in groups of three instead of pairs. One example is Player A tells a story to Player B. Player C also tells a story to Player B. Player B listens to both stories at once. When the groups are stopped, Player B reveals first what they remember from Player A’s story, then Player C’s. Round 3 can be tried by only a single group of three with other learners watching, by all the students, or not at all.

EXPLANATION AND DISCUSSION POINTS.

When the exercise is over, the instructor asks a player to reveal what he or she noticed in each round. Players should confront if they had difficulty listening when they were in the role of Listener (Round 1), as well as when they took on the role of Storyteller and Listener simultane-

ously (Round 2). When I conduct this exercise with my improv troupe, we repeat Round 2 several times. Players often find they have success with practice and that they can remember more of what was said as they tune themselves acutely to both roles.

Games

A game can consist of two players in a “scene,” in essence having a conversation in a particular place. In fact, an improv scene consists of some of the same terms familiar to conflict resolution practitioners. There is the “set-up,” the “conflict,” and the “resolution.” These are the actual terms used in the improv world. In a typical three-hour practice session, an improv troupe might try twenty or thirty scenes. Each one of these is a mini-mediation session.

The players enter the scene with an “objective” and begin to “set-up” the scene. The idea for the objective usually is based on a suggestion given by an audience member or someone who is not on stage. A player’s objective can be thought of as what mediators term a party’s “interests.”

Suggestions can be anything at all. Often times a word (toothbrush), a relationship (sisters) or an emotion (ecstatic) works well. Incorporating the suggestion provides a focus that helps the player to form a character, understand who they are, or what they are doing in a scene. Suggestions also provide a limitless cache of scenarios from which to work. No two scenes are ever alike, but each has a “who” a “what” and a “where.”

After the “set-up,” a conflict develops between the players. The conflict might be about their competing objectives or based on their personalities or identities. Most of the time, a third player enters to resolve the conflict, either through inventing options or helping the characters to clarify and understand what they are really after—their interests.

Other improv games or structures refer to improvisational constructs that consist of rules that the players must follow. Games can be a way for learners to freely use the skill they have been practicing, in an interesting or fun way.

NARRATIVE STORY (GAME)

With the help of a Conductor, learners share the telling of a single story. Four players are lined up, shoulder-to-shoulder and informed by the trainer that they will be telling a story together. At different moments, they each will become the Storyteller as dictated by the Conductor. The trainer explains that he or she will act as the Conductor of the story. If the Conductor points at a player, he or she is turned “on” and is instantly the Storyteller. The Storyteller recites the text of the story with gusto, just as if he or she were reading it from a book to an interested audience. The Storyteller is instantly turned “off” when the Conductor points to a new player. The new Storyteller must continue from where the last Storyteller left off. The Conductor asks those not playing for a topic or title of the story (a suggestion), repeats it to the four players and begins.

The timing the Conductor uses to switch between Storytellers is important. The Conductor starts by pointing at a player and should not switch to a new Storyteller until a few paragraphs of the story are recited, or the player gets stuck. Once each of the four Storytellers has had a chance to tell a small piece of the story, the Conductor starts to switch storytellers more rapidly. Now the Conductor switches after only a few sentences per player. Finally, the Conductor varies the choice of Storyteller mid-sentence. Even with the increasing level of difficulty, players should attempt not to repeat words when the Storyteller is switched. Players should attempt to keep the flow and orientation of the story. The game is then repeated with four new players until the entire group has had a chance to participate.

EXPLANATION AND DISCUSSION POINTS.

After everyone has participated, the instructor asks the learners which stories they were able to follow and why. The trainer may also ask, "As an audience member listening to the story, what were the memorable characters or places?"

Once the players have a chance to share what was successful, discuss the experience of being the Storyteller. "When one of the other three Storytellers in the group was "on" was it difficult to merely listen and not preplan what to say next time you are chosen?" Indicate that the only task that matters is listening, because the story is constantly changing. Planning what to say next actually disrupts the play. Of course, this can be a valuable lesson when listening in real life. In training sessions I conduct with learners that have no background in improvisation, the idea of both leading the story and following the story at the same time can be difficult at first. Repeat the game with different groups to allow learners the chance to explore listening without consequence.

Conclusion

Among their many functions, ombudsman offices offer training sessions on a variety of conflict resolution and communication themes. While established teaching methods are suitable, a new approach using improv concepts and activities derived from theater is offered to allow trainers the ability to focus on individual skills and experiential learning. Using improv, learners are able to work with an endless variety of scenarios, an experience that conventional approaches do not offer.

Improv warm-ups, exercises and games enhance the experience for the learner, who can now bring intuition and spontaneity to the training. With no spectators, improv makes training more effective, enjoyable and engaging.

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Measuring the Impact of Organizational Conflict

SHWETA DHIMAN

ABSTRACT

Conflict is an inevitable phenomenon in organizational affairs, often necessary for participatory governance. It cannot be eliminated; however its negative impact can and should be contained. Managing the impact of conflict requires a robust and holistic measurement mechanism that can identify and assess the impact, and monitor and evaluate its management. To this end, a study spanning several months was carried out at a public sector international organization. This article draws from its findings, offering an insight into approaches to framing the essence of organizational conflict and using the art and science of risk management to capture its impact holistically.

KEY WORDS

Measurement, accountability, participatory governance, risk management, ombudsman

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INTRODUCTION

“Measure what is measurable, and make measurable what is not so” — Galileo Galilei

Conflict resolution practitioners often get to see both sides of stories that knock on their doors, organizational ombudspersons especially poised to see more than two sides — bigger pictures including systemic trends and patterns in workplace conflict, root causes and plaguing conditions perpetuating it, and the detrimental impact of conflict on various constituencies including its workforce, the organization, and its clients. This privilege comes straddled with the opportunity of driving transformational change within organizations’ conflict management culture — change which can be systematically measured, monitored, and evaluated.

PURPOSE AND RELEVANCE — THE NEED TO MEASURE

A previous study about controlling conflict costs (published in the Journal of the International Ombudsman Association in 2011) indicated the need to develop robust measurement mechanisms, and pointed out, that without measurement, conflict management in organizations risks being limited to issue resolution and transactional changes to systemic problems. It does not extend to a systematic basis upon which an organization's conflict resolution strategy can be evaluated nor its performance on conflict management be appraised for its overall impact on the organization.

In addition to the what the study point outs, measurement offers a sound basis to gauge the efficacy and adequacy of existing conflict management establishments within organizations, such as an Ombudsman's office; a basis to enhance the role of the Ombudsperson in participatory corporate governance; and a basis to evaluate any need to mainstream conflict management by embedding it into operational processes.

With this theme as the impetus, a qualitative research study spanning approximately seven months was conducted at an international organization in the public sector. The research methodology was a case study of conflict within one agency of the international organization and involved document desk reviews; semi structured interviews and informal discussions; and on-site observations. Publicly accessible sources, internal sources, and proxy data (where data for the agency or broader organization was unavailable or non-existent) was used for the purpose. In order to better inform practice and build a rooted business case, rigorous inter disciplinary theory was relied upon. Overall substantive support was extended by the Ombudsperson's office, which has in the past driven efforts to raise awareness of the costs of conflict, and continues to do so. The idea behind this work was to step up those efforts and translate them into an actionable approach to conflict cost measurement.

The aim of the study was as follows:

1. Identify a holistic, scalable, and integrative approach that would measure the impact of internal conflict on the organization's strategic objectives, in other words, the real cost of conflict.
2. Assess the effectiveness of the organization's Conflict Management System (CMS)¹ in managing the impact of conflict, and where relevant, to recommend strategies for the CMS to expand and evolve.

FRAMING ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT

Challenged by the subtle dangers of reification, a deliberate choice was made to refrain from strictly defining the term 'organizational conflict' or delimiting its boundaries. During the course of the study, it was found that so much of what the term 'conflict' denotes lies in the eyes of the beholder, and this is stated based on several unstructured interviews conducted with people outside the ombudsperson's office — to some it is simply a disagreement among people and no more, to others, the real conflict is not so much the manifest effects, but underlying structural causes and systemic failures which are sources of problems, and to others still, it is unregulated dynamics within the self, causing unreasonable expectations and conduct. To practitioners in the field of conflict resolution, it is perhaps all of the above, and more.

Of significance here is not so much what the term 'conflict' means to people in an organizational context, but how such understanding colors general perception of the role of the Ombudsperson in internal control, and of the services an Ombudsperson's office can provide in promoting principles of good governance. This is especially true in organizations where Ombudsperson's channels are nascent and evolving, and demand for their services must sometimes be created in the midst of other actors in governance such as Ethics, Audit, and Investigations units. Measuring the impact of conflict as a tool for good governance would be somewhat like applying a blue ocean strategy² (BOS) — creating an uncontested market space by offering a leap in value.

In order to develop a clear understanding of the phenomenon without defining it, the first stage in the study involved constructing a theoretical framework as the basis to discover the characteristic features of the multi-dimensional phenomenon. Deconstructing the phenomenon into broad elements including issues and trends involved; causes, conditions and context; impact of conflict on various constituencies; and the role of the existing conflict management system, fundamental aspects were probed in detail. Aspects such as the extent of reliance on volume of cases as a measure of severity and potential threat; cognizance of factors inhibiting conflict from surfacing; hidden markets clustered around cultures of sorts; sphere of outreach and influence of the CMS; recognition of multiple root causes and chronic conditions; attribution of causes to both, agency and structure; the socio-political context within which the organization operates; and the wide ranging impact of conflict, were analyzed. Using proprietary and proxy data, the conflict system comprising the four elements (issues and trends; causes, conditions, and context; impact and costs of conflict; the CMS) was viewed in its entirety.

A deep dive using the optic of social science theories helped cull out characteristic features of the conflict system, such as interconnectedness and interdependence, reciprocal and bidirectional causality, non-linearity, complexity, and unpredictability. Conflict within the organization examined, was found to be a dynamical system encompassing the interplay of the elements (issues, causes, impact, and CMS) mentioned earlier, which interacted in complex and nonlinear ways. According to Dynamical Systems³ Theory (DST) in social psychology, because of the

complexity of interactions among various elements in a system, the system as a whole evolves in seemingly unpredictable ways, and the activation of each element is determined by the total influence from other elements in the system. Dynamical systems are held together and kept in place by strong attractors. An example of an attractor in an interpersonal conflict is a strongly held view of the other party, such that even contradictory information is interpreted so that it is in line with the strongly held view, thus keeping the conflict in place.

In the context of the organization examined in this study, a strong attractor for the conflict system was the organization's culture of accountability in all its facets — from a strategic high level accountability of the organization as a whole to meet its objectives and serve its clients, to the accountability of the organization's senior management to its executive board for the efficient stewardship of its resources, to the accountability of each member of its workforce to display ethical conduct, et al. Concern for greater accountability is consistently echoed in the reports of the ombudsperson's office for the relevant international organization examined.

So how does one approach conflict resolution in such a complex and multi-dimensional conflict environment? On the aspect of conflict resolution, DST points out that any attempts to change the state of conflict without changing the attractors that continually reinstate the conflict may yield short term results, but are unlikely to succeed in the long run. The theory further states that lasting change can be promoted when the attractors in the system are changed.

In the context of the organization studied, a robust and holistic measurement and management model would be an attempt to foster such a lasting change by promoting accountability which is a strong attractor in its conflict system.

APPROACH TO MEASUREMENT

The quest is not to measure the phenomenon in its entirety — it is to measure the intermediate and final impact of conflict. One might then question the need to study the entire system and its characteristics instead of focusing one's gaze solely on the impact. This is because the impact of conflict on employees, the organization, and its clients, is ever changing according to Dynamical Systems Theory. New issues, trends, causes, and conditions can cause the impact and costs of conflict to be felt in ways not experienced before. Emerging studies can shed light on perspectives which may have escaped conscious attention in the past. For instance, a report published by Earth Institute Columbia University in 2012 based on decades of research on happiness, shows happiness and satisfaction to be directly correlated with workplace aspects including measures of job security, autonomy, workplace trust, independence, and intrinsic motivation at work, rather than only pay at work.

That the impact of conflict in a state of perpetual evolution is not only common sense, but is grounded in rigorous theory. Applying Dynamical Systems Theory to an organizational conflict context, studying the impact of conflict in isolation is likely to offer at best a myopic vision. Any measurement models built on impact assessments alone and using sub-elements of impact as inputs to arrive at summary statistics, risk being less comprehensive and rigorous, and having a restricted worldview. Such inputs might include sub elements such as absenteeism, presenteeism, productivity and efficiency losses, stress induced healthcare costs, litigation expenses, reputational damage, high turnover, and others.

The impact is a key subject of inquiry — were it not for the detrimental impact of conflict, disputed issues and root causes of conflict would be relegated to mere transactional occurrences and unavoidable costs of doing business incurred in the pursuit of the organization's mission — not intrinsically motivating enough to warrant change. Measuring the impact of conflict provides a business case for conflict management to be part of the corporate governance agenda, and showcases how the two are intertwined. Measuring the impact holistically, rather than in isolation invariably helps draw attention to the causes and conditions which lie at the source of all disputes. In other words, it is necessary to study the characteristics of a conflict system as a whole if lasting change is to be promoted.

Studying the nature of the conflict and framing its characteristic features is essential to identifying the attributes one must look for while selecting a measurement approach — this could differ for organizations. On a more general note, some theorists suggest that factors while selecting a measure should include content validity; reliability; and precision i.e. whether the measure captures the concept; whether it yields consistent results; how finely can it be expressed (for example measures could use high, medium, low rankings; ranking on a numerical scale; or more precise quantification). In the context of the organization studied, all the factors mentioned above were considered. In addition to these considerations, practical aspects such as scalability and ease of integration with business processes were also kept in mind. Using these parameters three measurement approaches were evaluated, including constructing a Composite Index from the ground up; adopting and integrating external tools such as Conflict Cost Calculator⁴; and maximizing the use of the organization's ERM framework. ERM was found to be the approach most fit for the purpose and concepts discussed in this article.

In order to measure the uncertain and unpredictable impact of conflict, it is important to determine what it represents. Viewed from the perspective of the examined organization's risk management strategy, (one of its key tools to strengthen accountability within the organization) uncertainty associated with the impact of conflict presents both threats and opportunities. Initiatives such as The Committee of Sponsoring Organizations (COSO) of the Treadway Commission⁵ dedicated to providing thought leadership on risk management, suggest that all entities face uncertainty and that such uncertainty presents both threats and opportunities, with the potential to erode or enhance value. Events with a negative impact represent threats, which can prevent value creation or erode existing value. Viewed this way, the impact of conflict represents what is widely defined as risk. Some experts in risk management define risk as any

deviation what is expected, including both downside volatility (a range of possible downside events) and upside volatility (a range of possible upside events). This definition, considers risk as the possibility that results may be either higher or lower than expected.

Speaking of expect results, this will vary depending upon the vision, purpose and goals of different organizations. In the context of the international organization examined in this study, expected results are not only what it is expected to deliver to its clients, but also how it conducts itself in the pursuit of its goals. For this organization, whether the impact of conflict represents downside risks or opportunities will depend largely upon the effectiveness of its internal control system and the Conflict Management System. Managed effectively, it could provide opportunities for transformation in organizational culture. If not, it would contribute to ongoing high costs and negative impact for all stakeholders involved, including its clients.

After evaluating other potential approaches, Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) was selected as a rational fit. Enterprise Risk Management, a holistic approach to risk management, is a process in management strategy and is designed to identify events that may affect the achievement of the entity's objectives. Experts in risk management state that ERM is not strictly a serial or linear process, where one component affects only the next. It is a dynamic and multidirectional process in which almost any component can and does influence another.

ERM is a reasonable choice when evaluated against the measurement criteria discussed earlier in this article. It is a valid, reasonable, and precise approach. ERM is embedded into the business practices of the international organization examined in this study, and is a scalable model. ERM's life cycle approach depicted in Figure 1 below allows for risk events to be identified from a risk universe or register, qualitatively assessed and measured by assigning weights along impact and probability scales, development of appropriate response strategies, monitoring and evaluation of results. It is also a key tool at the disposal of the examined organization to promote



Figure 1

accountability. The organization's risk catalogue with broad risk types such as strategic, operational, governance, financial and other risk categories and sub categories serves as a guide to risk identification.

The International Organization for Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI)⁶, points out in one of its reports that the methodology for analyzing risks can vary, because many risks are difficult to quantify while others lend themselves to a numerical diagnosis, stating further that risk evaluation is more of an art than a science.

EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IN MANAGING THE IMPACT OF CONFLICT

One of the aims of the study as mentioned earlier was to throw light on the effectiveness of the Conflict Management System (CMS) in internal control and in managing the impact of conflict. INTOSAI guidelines on internal control standards state that internal control constitutes a series of actions that permeate an entity's activities and are pervasive in the way an organization is run. It further notes that everyone in an organization has a responsibility for internal control, and that external parties play an important role in the internal control process, by providing information useful to effect internal control.

As inside outsiders, Ombudspersons and other actors within an organization's CMS, play an important role in governance. Evaluating the effectiveness of the CMS in internal control was done using INTOSAI guidelines which provide a basis against which internal control can be evaluated. The guidelines include components such as tone at the top, risk assessment, communication, control activities, and monitoring. The direct and indirect role played by the CMS along each of these parameters was evaluated and it was found that there were considerable opportunities for individual and collective action on the part of actors within the organization's CMS to strengthen internal control. Assessing the risks related to the impact of conflict, measuring them robustly, and vociferously communicating them could help influence the tone at the top and could have a greater impact on the organization's internal control activities.

Making structured risk assessments part of service delivery and standard operating procedure of the CMS, and collective action on the part of the CMS would create a force field giving the conflict management discussion a seat at the enterprise risk management table. This could be done in several different ways, one of which is to form a working group with representatives from different parts of the organization. A working group would be ideal to develop a shared understanding of organizational conflict and the reasonably foreseeable risks its impact poses (which are perhaps going unheeded); to develop robust action plans to identify, assess and strategically communicate these risks to the organization's administration. The idea here is to expand the CMS from distinct offices and units, to the enterprise as a whole (i.e. embedded in business processes). It is similar to having checks and balances for compliance — organization's set up compliance offices, but compliance remains everybody's business. The impetus to have

stringent checks and balances is due of the impact of non-compliance in the form of regulatory penalties et al. Similarly, unless the impact of conflict pinches the corporate agenda, there will be little incentive to transform. Collective action on the part of the CMS using ERM could potentially move the needle in that direction.

An additional recommendation is to go beyond the qualitative ERM process described earlier, and make risk reporting even more precise by quantifying the impact of risks. This means, in addition to qualitatively measuring the risk, efforts could be made to quantify risks. An external ERM expert consulted during this study recommended identifying risks by source, and working with worst case scenarios for the purpose of assigning qualitative scores on the probability scale, and having a few clearly defined key metrics in order to capture the impact on the organization's end objectives. Using several numerical methods, individual risk scenarios and the impact of integrated risk scenarios / risk interactivity can be quantified to arrive at enterprise risk exposure values, and a single statistic incorporating all the downside risk. The expert consulted stated that even risks which appear very subjective in nature such as poor management can be quantified using a deterministic approach to risk scenario development, which involves human judgment rather than automated processes. This is especially important in the context of conflict situations which are often fraught with subjectivity and lack of objective and quantifiable data. An example of a deterministic risk scenario is a conflict situation in which due to poor management in a certain business segment, the unit experiences high turnover, loss of critical employees, absenteeism, all of which impact the productivity of the unit, and adversely impacts the reputation of the organization and business unit. Reputational damage, in turn causes loss of funding, and the unit fails to meet its strategic objectives. This approach also helps identify the source and facilitates decision making which addresses the root cause.

In addition to making risk reporting more precise, quantification offers another way to measure the value of service provided by an Ombudsperson's office — a mitigation related service, the value of which can be measured as its impact on the organization's end objectives. As the risk expert's recommended method suggests, the value being positive if its contribution to objectives due to lowered risk exposure is greater than its detraction from objectives.

CONCLUSION

Given the hierarchical nature of the organization studied, it is the tone at the top which has overall influence on structuring control activities, and implementing change initiatives. The extent to which the CMS is able to influence decision making at the top will determine the extent to which it can expand to become embedded in day to day business processes. Concurrently, this will also mean that the CMS evolves to a more preventive system in which the negative impact of conflict can be contained early on or even nipped in the bud. Impact assessments help establish the business rationale for this, and ERM offers a scientific platform to measure the real costs of conflict. It needs to be harnessed effectively by the CMS in order for conflict management to become part of the corporate governance agenda.

ENDNOTES

¹ The scope of the CMS in this study was limited to the Ombudsman's office, the Ethics Office, and the Audit Office.

² Kim and Mauborgne, professors of management strategy at INSEAD, coined the term 'blue oceans'. In their book 'Blue Ocean Strategy', they describe blue oceans as unknown and untapped market space, which can be created by reaching beyond existing demand by focusing on noncustomers and offering a leap in value. Applied mainly in industrial growth and economic policy, the use of the term in this paper is limited in scope and meant to highlight the untapped market space for an Ombudsman's services.

³ Nowak and Vallacher in their book 'Dynamical Systems in Social Psychology' state that DST has proven useful in understanding diverse phenomena. They state that elements in a dynamical system interact in complex, reciprocal and non-linear ways. Elements are interactive in nature and it is the pattern of causal relations that shapes the phenomenon, rather than any causal mechanism in isolation. The basic feature of DST is connectionism i.e. the activation of each element is determined by the total influence of all other elements across connections, its architecture resembling that of the nervous system. In non-linear systems, the effects of changes in one variable are not reflected in a proportional manner in others. According to DST, dynamical systems are kept in place by strong attractors which are coherent states that emerge over time from the interaction among elements, and that lasting change can take place when attractors in the system are dislodged or changed.

⁴ Developed by Daniel Dana of Mediation Training, the 'Dana Measure of Financial Cost of Organizational Conflict' projects a summary statistic by using objective and quantifiable data inputs in a tool box.

⁵ Organized in 1985 COSO is a private sector joint initiative of the Institute of Internal Auditors, American Institute of CPAs, American Accounting Association, Financial Executives International, and The Institute of Management Accountants.

⁶ INTOSAI is an umbrella organization for the external public sector audit community. INTOSAI Guidelines for Internal Control Standards for the Public Sector serve as a living document reflecting general principles, ethical values, and standards for the design, implementation, and evaluation of internal control.

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AUTHORS' BIOGRAPHIES

Brian Bloch is the Ombudsman with the Special Trustee for American Indians in the Department of the Interior. He is also the co-director and long-term organizational ombudsman of ISKCONResolve, a global faith-based integrated conflict management system which he founded in 2002. Brian has an MA in Conflict Resolution from Eastern Mennonite University. He has trained mediators in over 50 countries, and worked with the Supreme Court of India's Mediation & Conciliation Project to introduce mediation into the legal system in India. He has taught conflict studies at Universities in Europe and Asia. He is an associate editor of IOA's Journal. brianjbloch@gmail.com

Mary Chavez Rudolph has served in the role of Ombudsman in a university setting for the past 13 years. Mary served as the President of the University and College Ombuds Association (UCOA) and served as a Director on the Inaugural Board of the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) — currently serving on the IOA Certification, Mentoring, and Professional Development Committees. Mary earned a Doctorate in Educational Leadership and Innovation from the University of Colorado Denver. Mary.ChavezRudolph@ucdenver.edu

Melissa Connell has been an Ombuds at the University of Colorado Denver since 1994. Her office provides services to two campuses including a health sciences center. Melissa was amongst the first to become certified as an organizational ombudsman practitioner in early 2010. She is a member of the IOA Mentoring Program as well as a mentor. Melissa holds a JD from the University of Denver. Melissa.Connell@ucdenver.edu

Shweta Dhiman has recently earned a Master's degree in Negotiation and Conflict Resolution from Columbia University, where she was also a research associate at Vale Columbia Center on Sustainable International Investment, a leading public policy think tank and partnership between Columbia Law School and Earth Institute. Prior to that Shweta worked for the United Nations Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services. She holds an MBA and has several years of progressively responsible experience in the private sector, having worked for American Express, Prudential, Merrill Lynch and ICICI Bank Ltd., in various capacities, projects, and markets. sd2647@columbia.edu

Frank Fowlie is the Ombudsman with the International Organization for Migration at Geneva, Switzerland. Frank was the inaugural ICANN Ombudsman from 2004 – 2011. Frank holds a Doctorate in Conflict Resolution from La Trobe University, Melbourne, and is a leading expert in the areas of Ombudsman Evaluation, Online Dispute Resolution, and Sport related Dispute Resolution. ffowlie@iom.int

Adam Barak Kleinberger is the Assistant Ombudsman at Cornell University. His research has focused on improving mediation skills through improvisation and clowning. He holds a BA from Brandeis University, an MA in conflict resolution from the University of Massachusetts Boston and a diploma from Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Clown College. Adam has been learning, teaching and performing improv for twenty years in groups such as False Advertising, Theater Fun Nite, M  l  e, the Underkr  ft, and currently Comedy-FLOPs. Adam has worked at the Consensus Building Institute in Cambridge, MA, mediated in Massachusetts' district courts and trained students, staff and faculty at City University of New York. abk92@cornell.edu

Chris LaHatte is the ICANN Ombudsman and reports directly to the ICANN Board. He is available to the ICANN Community for complaints about delay and unfairness between ICANN and the supporting organisations. His back ground is as a lawyer in New Zealand and overseas, and as a mediator and dispute resolution specialist.

He has completed a Master of Management in Dispute Resolution through Massey University, presenting as the Research Report an examination of the Judicial Settlement Conference in New Zealand. He is a Fellow of AMINZ in Mediation and Arbitration. Chris LaHatte has presented a number of seminars for the Law Society and for other publishers such as LexisNexis. He is an editor for Brookers District Court Procedure. Chris LaHatte is a Costs Assessor and Mediator for the New Zealand Law Society in Auckland and Wellington. chris.lahatte@icann.org

David Miller is the Editor of the JIOA and is Ombudsman for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, based in Geneva, Switzerland. He was formerly the Geneva-based Staff Ombudsman for the World Health Organisation, and UNAIDS. He is a member of the International Committee of the IOA, and of the IOA Uniform Reporting Categories Task Force. David has been a faculty trainer for the IOA in Europe and Africa, and a founder member of the JIOA Editorial Board. He is a specialist in the management of HIV/AIDS, and currently also works as an international public health consultant to governments and HIV/AIDS programmes in the African and Pacific regions. He is a practicing clinical psychologist with post-graduate qualifications from the University of Auckland and a PhD in Public Health Medicine and Epidemiology from the University of Nottingham. decanterbay@gmail.com

Francine Montemurro was appointed Boston University's first Ombuds in September 2009. Before moving to Boston to establish the Ombuds Office at BU, she was at the State University of New York at Binghamton from 1997 to 2009 where she created the Ombuds office there. She has a bachelor's degree from the State University of New York at Binghamton, and a JD from Syracuse University. She has extensive experience in alternative dispute resolution, including providing interventions and workshops on mediation and conflict management, teaching at the undergraduate and graduate levels, and providing workplace, community, family, and victim-offender mediation. She lives in Boston with two wonderful rescue dogs and lots of books. fmonte@bu.edu

Mary Rowe is an MIT Ombudsperson and Adjunct Professor of Negotiation and Conflict Management at the MIT Sloan School of Management. She came to MIT in 1973. She has a PhD in Economics, has been a mediator for many years, and was a founding member of the Corporate Ombudsman Association, now the International Ombudsman Association. The MIT Ombuds Office website (<http://web.mit.edu/ombud>) includes some of her articles on the ombuds profession, conflict management system design and other topics, including: "Options Functions and Skills," "Dealing with the Fear of Violence," (co-authored with Linda Wilcox), "Dealing with—or Reporting—'Unacceptable' Behavior" (co-authored with Linda Wilcox and Howard Gadlin) and "An Organizational Ombuds Office in a System for Dealing with Conflict and Learning from Conflict." She has lived and worked in Africa, the Caribbean, in Europe and the US. Rowe has a number of special interests in the field of conflict management: unacceptably unprofessional behavior of all kinds, harassment of all kinds, "micro-inequities," that is, small insults that do damage; mentoring and career development, including "micro-affirmations;" dealing with very difficult people and people who "won't let go;" options for action if one sees something bad happen; mediating intellectual property disputes; work/family concerns; the role of apologies. She likes children, gardens, music, scuba, chocolate — and admires the artistic achievements of other people. mrowe@MIT.edu

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2. Ensure the manuscript contains no mention of the authors' organisations, names, or the names of key colleagues. Substitute real names with "X" throughout – they can be placed in the article after review.
3. Similarly, all those who are being acknowledged as informal reviewers, discussants or inspirations for the submitted article should be anonymised in the manuscript. Where acknowledgements are being made, a separate section for this should appear on the front page of the manuscript, along with the key words, author's name and affiliation, a brief author biography and an abstract of not more than 150 words.
4. Where author names and organisation names cannot be avoided, then authors must accept that their article will not be anonymous. This is not preferred by the JIOA but, where inevitable, authors are required to state that they waive the right of an anonymous review.

JIOA prefers submissions prepared in Microsoft Word. Word Perfect, ASCII and RTF are also acceptable.

TITLE PAGE, KEY WORDS AND AUTHOR INFORMATION:

The name(s) of the author(s) should appear only on a separate title page which should also include the author(s) affiliation and mailing address. The title page should also include a biographical note of no more than 100 words. Contact information, including telephone numbers and mailing addresses, should be provided for each author. Additionally, the Title page should include up to six key words, including the word "Ombudsman" (or whichever variant of this the author has employed in the article). A sample title page is attached.

Author(s) should also submit a statement indicating all affiliations, financial or otherwise, that may compromise or appear to compromise the objectivity or unbiased nature of their submission. Such conflicts of interest may arise out of commitments involving honoraria, consultant relationships, participation in a speakers' bureau, stock holdings or options, royalties, ownership of a company or patent, research

contracts or grants, and, in some instances, being an official representative of another organization. Any conflict of interest will be included as a footnote in the published manuscript.

ABSTRACT: Please supply an abstract of 100 or fewer words with your submission. The abstract should also include a word count of the article, excluding references.

GRAPHICS

Please convert all graphics to TIFF or EPS format. Line art should be a minimum of 600 dpi, and half-tones a minimum of 266 dpi in resolution.

Illustrations should not be inserted in the text but each provided as separate files and given figure numbers and title of paper and name. All photographs, graphs and diagrams should be referred to as Figures and should be numbered consecutively in the text in Arabic numerals (e.g. Fig. 3). Captions for the figures should be provided and should make interpretation possible without reference to the text. Captions should include keys to symbols.

Tables should be submitted as separate files and should be given Arabic numbers (e.g. Table 3). Their approximate position in the text should be indicated. Units should appear in parentheses in the column heading but not in the body of the table. Words or numerals should be repeated on successive lines; 'ditto' or 'do' should not be used.

STYLE

Authors should conform to the Chicago Manual of Style. Authors will be consulted during the editing process, but are expected to permit minor standardizations and corrections (i.e., headings, alignments, citation formatting, standard American English spelling, and minor punctuation). JIOA encourages and promotes the use of gender-neutral language.

Please note that the Journal publishes manuscripts in accordance with the linguistic and grammatical conventions of the author's country of writing. This means that spelling ('colour' or 'color'; 'organization' or 'organisation') may vary, and Editorial and grammatical conventions may also vary (e.g., placement of citations). While the Journal will normally publish accepted manuscripts in the linguistic style and grammatical conventions of the author, the final say on this rests with the Editor.

CITATIONS: The author(s) are responsible for the accuracy and thoroughness of citations. Footnotes should be consecutively numbered and collected at the end of the article. References should be listed on a separate page at the end of the manuscript. Citations should follow the Chicago Manual of Style format. If the submission is accepted for publication, the author should be prepared to provide access to copies of all materials cited.

Examples of citations:

Kosakowski, T., & Miller, D. (2007). Why we get no sleep at night. *Journal of the International Ombudsman Association*, 1, 100-101.

Rowe, M.P. (1977). Go Find Yourself a Mentor. In P. Bourne & V. Parness (Eds), *Proceedings of the NSF Conference on Women's Leadership and Authority, University of California, Santa Cruz, California, 1977* (pp 120-140). Santa Cruz: University of California Press.

Miller, D. (2000). *Dying to care? Work, stress and burnout in HIV/AIDS carers*. London: Taylor & Francis.

Titles of journals should not be abbreviated.

COMPREHENSION: The Journal and its reviewers pay much attention to ease of comprehension of manuscripts. For example, is jargon used without explanation, do sentences contain more than one idea per sentence, and are paragraphs and sentences too long? Authors are requested to avoid such concerns by avoiding jargon, keeping to one idea per sentence, and keeping sentences and paragraphs short.

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not affect ownership of copyright in the material. Government employees need to complete the Publication Agreement, although copyright in such cases does not need to be assigned. After submission authors will retain the right to publish their paper in other media (please see the Publication Agreement for further details). To assist authors the appropriate form will be supplied by the editorial board.

CONSIDERATION OF SUBMISSIONS

Blind Evaluations

Submissions are reviewed by at least two editors without consideration of the author's identity. Please ensure that the manuscript is anonymous by removing any link to the author. Remove reference material in any footnote that references the author of the piece for review and replace information with "Author." Note the instructions on making the manuscript anonymous in the section entitled "Format."

Timeline for Acceptance

JIOA accepts submissions on a rolling basis throughout the calendar year. The review process starts on the first day of every month. It is intended that decisions on publication will be made within three months of receipt of a submitted manuscript.

Expedited Review

JIOA will attempt to honor reasonable requests for an expedited review of submissions. However, if we are unable to give an expedited review by the date requested, you will be notified that the article has been withdrawn from consideration. To request an expedited review, please contact the JIOA Editor and provide: your name, phone number, and e-mail address; the title of the article; your deadline for a decision.

Publication Dates

JIOA is published biannually. Articles are finalized for publication in September and March.

Antidiscrimination Policy

It is the policy of JIOA not to discriminate on the basis of race, gender, age, religion, ethnic background, marital status, disability, or sexual orientation.

SAMPLE FRONT PAGE

THE WAY THINGS ARE, HAVE BEEN AND WILL BE

John Doe
Organizational Ombudsman
ABC Inc.

Contact details:

ABC Inc.
1122 Washington Square
Washington, DC 12345
Tel: 012 345 6789
Email: abcomb@abc.com

Key Words: Ombudsman, history, dispute resolution, nirvana

Word Count (including Abstract): 2500

Abstract:

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, and Ombudsmen saved the day by offering ethically based, neutral, independent and confidential services to their organization ("X") and staff. This paper dissects how Ombudsmen worked in the circumstances of concern and how they might systematise future interventions, using validated procedures described in detail in the article. The outcomes are identified, quantified, and a conceptual structure for applying the lessons learned is presented.

John Doe:

John Doe is a native of Equanimity and Hard Work, and has post-graduate degrees in thinking and doing from the School of Hard Knocks in the University of Life. He has worked as an organisational Ombudsman for 30 years and in his present position (at "X") for ten.

Acknowledgements:

The author is particularly grateful to A, B, and C for their stimulating discussion and ideas that led to the development of this article, and to D, E and F for reviewing earlier drafts of the manuscript.

PUBLICATION AND TRANSFER OF COPYRIGHT AGREEMENT

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Please keep one copy of this agreement for your files and return a signed copy to:

Editor, JIOA
David Miller, Ph.D.
384 Decanter Bay Road
RD3 Akaroa 7583
New Zealand
+64 3 304 7567
decanterbay@gmail.com

REVIEW PROCEDURES

RESPONSIBILITIES OF EDITORS AND EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBERS

JIOA editors are designated as the Editor and up to four Associate Editors. The editors collaborate with an editorial board comprised of approximately twenty participants with IOA membership. The editorial board is intended to reflect the diversity of the association as best we can.

The primary contact for JIOA is the Editor who is responsible for the journal publication process and the journal website. The Editor directs the processing of manuscripts and maintains communication with the IOA Board of Directors, the Associate Editors, editorial board members/reviewers, and authors.

Editorial board members, and other IOA members designated by the Editor in special cases, are responsible for the peer reviews of the submitted manuscripts.

REVIEW PROCESS

JIOA uses a blind review process and all references to the author(s) and author's workplace are removed prior to the manuscript being distributed to reviewers.

The Editor and/or Associate Editors will review each submitted manuscript to determine if the topic is appropriate for publication in JIOA. Acceptable manuscripts will be distributed electronically to three editorial board members selected by the Editor for peer review.

Manuscripts judged by the Editor and/or Associate Editors as inconsistent with the general mission of JIOA or the recognized Standards of Practice will be returned to the primary author with comments and possible suggestions for revision.

Reviewers will use a consistent and systematic set of criteria to evaluate the quality and potential of a

manuscript. These criteria include items related to content, organization, style, and relevance. Review forms and comments will be returned to the Editor.

Each reviewer will recommend one of the following:

- Accept for publication as is
- Accept for publication with minor revisions as indicated
- Accept for publication after major revisions by author(s)
- Revision and resubmission for subsequent review
- Reject manuscript

The final decision on whether to publish a manuscript is made by the Editor and is based upon recommendations from the peer reviewers. If there is significant variation among the reviewers regarding the status of a manuscript the Editor may:

- Seek additional input from the reviewers
- Request an additional review
- Seek additional input from the Associate Editors

Reviewers' comments will be provided to the primary author. However, the reviewers of a specific manuscript will remain anonymous. It is the policy of JIOA to work with authors to facilitate quality publications. The Editor may suggest or an author may request that a member of the editorial board be available to provide assistance at various stages of the preparation and publication process.

NOTES FOR JIOA REVIEWERS

Reviewing manuscripts for JIOA must be undertaken in accordance with the principles of the IOA — by demonstrating independence, neutrality and confidentiality. This requires that manuscripts be accorded the status of office visitors. The content of reviewed manuscripts and of reviews should not be shared with anyone other than the Editor of the JIOA.

It is important for reviews to have a forward-looking, beneficial intent – this is an opportunity to give feedback that will help nurture, guide and develop authorship. It is not an exercise in showing you know more, are wiser or more clever and literate in the subject matter! Authors should learn from reviews and take away from the review a sense of future direction and beneficial development for their paper.

The aim of the review is to strengthen contributions to the JIOA, and thereby strengthen the ombudsman profession. In this sense, a review is as much a critique of the reviewer as of the manuscript. Accordingly, it is a requirement that all reviews offer information that can help guide the author. Although reviews are confidential (i.e., the manuscript author does not know who the reviewers are), they are best written as though the author is in the room. Accordingly, a useful test of the reviewers' assertions is the "Old Bailey" test: If they were standing in the dock at the Old Bailey, would they be able to justify their assertions to the author? Are they making statements that are justifiable, verifiable and credible, or just say-so? Does the tone of their review convey the IOA Standards of Practice in practice?

Reviewers are asked to look out for issues of comprehension in manuscripts, particularly:

- Make strong recommendations, where appropriate, for authors to break up long paragraphs;
- Avoid and, where possible, eliminate jargon;
- Maintain only one idea per sentence.

Each of these issues comprises an element of the Fog Index — the estimation of the comprehension afforded by a manuscript. Where the Fog Index is high, comprehension is low, and vice versa. The JIOA aims for the lowest possible Fog Indexes for manuscripts.

Where criticism is appropriate, it should ideally be constructive and be contextualised within a set of options given by the reviewer for modification of the text. Where there are clear mistakes, inaccuracies

or errors, these should be indicated and corrections or options for alternative expression suggested. Personal criticism — whether of content, ideology, style or tone — is unacceptable.

Please note, suggestions for modification should be itemised and returned to the Editor using the "Comments to the Authors" section of the JIOA Referee Review Form, which is sent to reviewers together with the manuscript to be reviewed. Suggestions for modification should **not** be returned to the Editor in the form of "Track Changes" in the original manuscript. This would identify the reviewer to the author and, even if this does not concern the reviewer, it might concern or prejudice the author in their consideration of the reviewer's comments. Reviewing is a form of power relationship. That is why anonymity is required on both sides.

Manuscripts may come in a variety of styles — from the determinedly academic (with numerous citations and references) to the determinedly idiosyncratic and personal. All styles may be acceptable, and need to be reviewed within their own context. Opinion pieces may have been commissioned by the Editor and, where this is the case, this will be indicated by the Editor.

Please note that the Journal also publishes manuscripts that acknowledge the linguistic and grammatical conventions of the author's country of writing. This means that spelling ('colour' or 'color'; 'organization' or 'organisation') may vary, and Editorial and grammatical conventions may also vary (e.g., placement of citations). While the Journal will normally publish accepted manuscripts in the linguistic style and grammatical conventions of the author, the final say on this rests with the Editor.

IOA STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

PREAMBLE

The IOA Standards of Practice are based upon and derived from the ethical principles stated in the IOA Code of Ethics.

Each Ombudsman office should have an organizational Charter or Terms of Reference, approved by senior management, articulating the principles of the Ombudsman function in that organization and their consistency with the IOA Standards of Practice.

STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

INDEPENDENCE

- 1.1** The Ombudsman Office and the Ombudsman are independent from other organizational entities.
- 1.2** The Ombudsman holds no other position within the organization which might compromise independence.
- 1.3** The Ombudsman exercises sole discretion over whether or how to act regarding an individual's concern, a trend or concerns of multiple individuals over time. The Ombudsman may also initiate action on a concern identified through the Ombudsman's direct observation.
- 1.4** The Ombudsman has access to all information and all individuals in the organization, as permitted by law.
- 1.5** The Ombudsman has authority to select Ombudsman Office staff and manage Ombudsman Office budget and operations.

NEUTRALITY AND IMPARTIALITY

- 2.1** The Ombudsman is neutral, impartial, and unaligned.
- 2.2** The Ombudsman strives for impartiality, fairness and objectivity in the treatment of people and the consideration of issues. The Ombudsman advocates for fair and equitably administered processes and does not advocate on behalf of any individual within the organization.
- 2.3** The Ombudsman is a designated neutral reporting to the highest possible level of the organization and operating independent of ordinary line and staff structures. The Ombudsman should not report to nor be structurally affiliated with any compliance function of the organization.
- 2.4** The Ombudsman serves in no additional role within the organization which would compromise the Ombudsman's neutrality. The Ombudsman should not be aligned with any formal or informal associations within the organization in a way that might create actual or perceived conflicts of interest for the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman should have no personal interest or stake in, and incur no gain or loss from, the outcome of an issue.
- 2.5** The Ombudsman has a responsibility to consider the legitimate concerns and interests of all individuals affected by the matter under consideration.
- 2.6** The Ombudsman helps develop a range of responsible options to resolve problems and facilitate discussion to identify the best options.

CONFIDENTIALITY

- 3.1** The Ombudsman holds all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence and takes all reasonable steps to safeguard confidentiality, including the following:

The Ombudsman does not reveal, and must not be required to reveal, the identity of any individual contacting the Ombudsman Office, nor does the Ombudsman reveal information provided in confidence that could lead to the identification of any individual contacting the Ombudsman Office, without that individual's express permission, given in the course of informal discussions with the Ombudsman; the Ombudsman takes specific action related to an individual's issue only with the individual's express permission and only to the extent permitted, and

even then at the sole discretion of the Ombudsman, unless such action can be taken in a way that safeguards the identity of the individual contacting the Ombudsman Office. The only exception to this privilege of confidentiality is where there appears to be imminent risk of serious harm, and where there is no other reasonable option. Whether this risk exists is a determination to be made by the Ombudsman.

3.2 Communications between the Ombudsman and others (made while the Ombudsman is serving in that capacity) are considered privileged. The privilege belongs to the Ombudsman and the Ombudsman Office, rather than to any party to an issue. Others cannot waive this privilege.

3.3 The Ombudsman does not testify in any formal process inside the organization and resists testifying in any formal process outside of the organization regarding a visitor's contact with the Ombudsman or confidential information communicated to the Ombudsman, even if given permission or requested to do so. The Ombudsman may, however, provide general, non-confidential information about the Ombudsman Office or the Ombudsman profession.

3.4 If the Ombudsman pursues an issue systemically (e.g., provides feedback on trends, issues, policies and practices) the Ombudsman does so in a way that safeguards the identity of individuals.

3.5 The Ombudsman keeps no records containing identifying information on behalf of the organization.

3.6 The Ombudsman maintains information (e.g., notes, phone messages, appointment calendars) in a secure location and manner, protected from inspection by others (including management), and has a consistent and standard practice for the destruction of such information.

3.7 The Ombudsman prepares any data and/or reports in a manner that protects confidentiality.

3.8 Communications made to the ombudsman are not notice to the organization. The ombudsman neither acts as agent for, nor accepts notice on behalf of, the organization and shall not serve in a position or role that is designated by the organization as a place to receive notice on behalf of the organization. However, the ombudsman may refer individuals to the appropriate place where formal notice can be made.

INFORMALITY AND OTHER STANDARDS

4.1 The Ombudsman functions on an informal basis by such means as: listening, providing and receiving information, identifying and reframing issues, developing a range of responsible options, and – with permission and at Ombudsman discretion – engaging in informal third-party intervention. When possible, the Ombudsman helps people develop new ways to solve problems themselves.

4.2 The Ombudsman as an informal and off-the-record resource pursues resolution of concerns and looks into procedural irregularities and/or broader systemic problems when appropriate.

4.3 The Ombudsman does not make binding decisions, mandate policies, or formally adjudicate issues for the organization.

4.4 The Ombudsman supplements, but does not replace, any formal channels. Use of the Ombudsman Office is voluntary, and is not a required step in any grievance process or organizational policy.

4.5 The Ombudsman does not participate in any formal investigative or adjudicative procedures. Formal investigations should be conducted by others. When a formal investigation is requested, the Ombudsman refers individuals to the appropriate offices or individual.

4.6 The Ombudsman identifies trends, issues and concerns about policies and procedures, including potential future issues and concerns, without breaching confidentiality or anonymity, and provides recommendations for responsibly addressing them.

4.7 The Ombudsman acts in accordance with the IOA Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, keeps professionally current by pursuing continuing education, and provides opportunities for staff to pursue professional training.

4.8 The Ombudsman endeavors to be worthy of the trust placed in the Ombudsman Office.