

## Chapter 31

# Using Integrative Development to Create a Coaching Culture in a Professional Services Firm

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### ABSTRACT

*This reflective case history introduces integrative development (ID) as an approach for evidence-based organizational change and development initiatives. ID brings adult development and organization development into a unified theory, and it aligns three human resource development disciplines (coaching, training, organization development) into a unified set of practices. The case history outlines how narrative coaching, an ID-based methodology, was used in creating a coaching culture in a professional services firm and offers principles and recommendations for EBOCD practitioners.*

### INTRODUCTION

*You should never send a changed person back into an unchanged environment. -- Steve Kerr, former VP of Leadership Development, GE*

This reflective case history addresses a paradox increasingly found in observing organizational change and development (OCD) initiatives: While organizations and the demands on them are becoming more complex, the development-focused professions serving them have become more specialized. This case history features a project that brought together over a decade of the author's work to address this paradox and served as the catalyst for the formulation of Integrative Development (ID). It holds promise for the evolution of new ways of thinking about development, a new breed of multi-disciplinary development practitioners, and new approaches to creating coaching cultures in organizations.

Integrative Development offers a third way that is neither *atomized* (e.g., siloed initiatives) nor *mechanized* (e.g., top-down initiatives), but supports what can be seen as 'structured emergence.' It builds on the legacies of educational pioneers such as Paulo Freire (1970) and Lev Vygotsky (1962/1986) in starting

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with what is present and providing the appropriate scaffolding for what people individually and collectively need to learn next to be successful. This third way can be seen as *democratized* (e.g., integrative initiatives) in that it views development as a psychosocial process. As Penuel and Wertsch (1995), write,

*Whereas many researchers have examined development as a process taking place within individuals, Vygotsky examined development as a process of transformation in individual functioning as various forms of social practice become internalized by individuals . . . A sociocultural approach considers these poles of sociocultural processes and individual functioning as interacting moments in human action, rather than static processes that exist in isolation from one another. (p. 84)*

This is timely because we need to think more epigenetically about development as people in organizations and in professions struggle to keep up with the pace of change. There is an urgent need to stop sending changed people—or, worse yet, people we only imagine have changed—back into unchanged environments if we as practitioners want to make a sustainable and meaningful impact. This reflective case history includes an introduction to Integrative Development as a way to address this issue, a summary of its use in creating a coaching culture in a professional services firm, and recommendations for both organizations and practitioners. This case history demonstrates that an evidence-based practice (EBP) approach to OCD is possible and yields benefits that exceed those of more traditional siloed and top-down approaches.

## **AN INTRODUCTION TO INTEGRATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

The search for a more integrative approach grew out of the author's doctoral research on the psychosocial nature of narratives and development and his frustration with the inability of professional silos—e.g., training, coaching, consulting and/or facilitating—to bring about real change. The first breakthrough came when the author created narrative coaching (Drake, 2018) as an integrative approach to developing individuals. The opportunity to design an integrative approach at scale came when an Executive Director sought out the author to run a coaching skills program in her health services organization. In the conversation that followed after he said “no”, the initial elements of a new approach came together and were tested in that organization. The author drew on efforts in related disciplines such as medicine and psychotherapy to create Integrative Development (ID) as a multidisciplinary approach to development and change. It served as the underlying architecture for the project in this reflective case history, and it has now been used in over twenty organizations.

For the purposes of this discussion, the term *integrative* is taken to mean, “combining and coordinating diverse elements in a holistic manner so that the results have a more sustainable impact on the immediate issue and the broader system”. In this case, integrative development brings adult development and organization development into a unified theory, and it aligns three human resource development disciplines (coaching, training, organization development) into a unified set of practices. For example, it includes and transcends three classic approaches to organization development (OD)<sup>1</sup>: the *diagrammatic* (focused on changing environments and how people are organized), the *diagnostic* (focused on changing behaviors and how people act and perform, and the *dialogic* (focused on changing mindsets and how people think and communicate). There is a need for an integrative approach because an organization's culture is a function of the interplay of all three. For example, many performance issues in organizations

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