

January 2010 Edition

The Collaborative Systems Reader

Welcome to Our Newsletter!

We are pleased to continue to bring you our e-newsletter, providing you with up-to-date information and news about The Axelrod Group and collaborative change systems.

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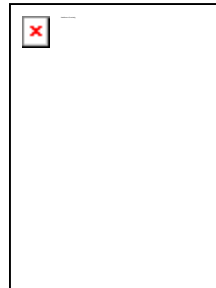
Wait Times Reduced from 96 Days to 4

[Improving Patient Access to Medical Services: Preventing the Patient from Being Lost in Translation](#)

In October 2009, our work with the Calgary Health System was cited in [Healthcare Quarterly](#).

Pat Gilroy is a patient in the Calgary health system with spinal problems. Her family doctor tells her she needs to be seen by a specialist as soon as possible or more damage will occur. But she can't get in to see a specialist. Not only can't she get in, she can't find out when she will get in. While she waits, she worries that more damage is occurring. She calls her family doctor and he doesn't know either. **She, like many other patients in the Calgary Health Region, is lost in the system.** Her only option is to go to the emergency room to get care. The most expensive care there is.

Today, not only will Pat be seen promptly, she can call her family doctor or specialist and they can tell her when she will be seen. Wait times in the Calgary Health System have been reduced between 10 and 40 percent, depending on the sub-specialty. In the diabetes, hypertension, and cholesterol center, the **wait time was reduced from 96 days to 4 days.** Pat Gilroy and others like her not only know the status of their referral, they will also be



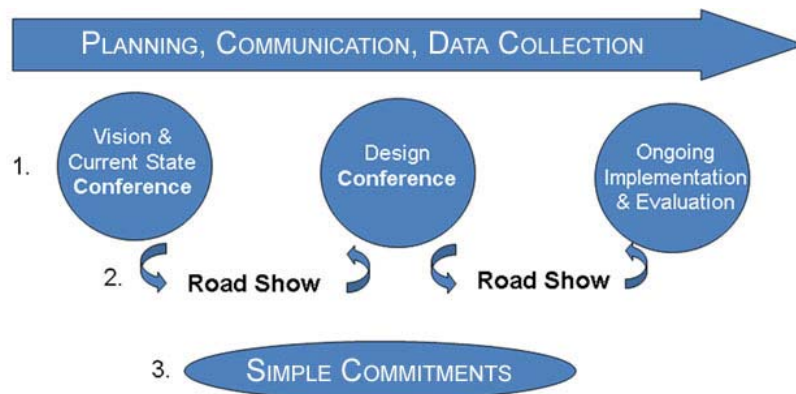
seen sooner even though the number of referrals in the system has increased.

So what happened?

In 2006, patients, doctors, nurses, and administrators agreed on one thing: the referral process was broken, and everyone had their own pet solution for fixing it.

All of this changed when more than 250 patients, patients' families, doctors, secretaries, decision-makers, and other professionals came together in two highly interactive conferences at the Calgary Zoo to understand, identify, and resolve the problems of the medical access and referral system. Paige, a secretary in a family physician office, said at the conference, "We need to know how the specialists want to receive the information." Brenda, a staff person in the specialist's office, explained they often received sketchy information. Dr. Scott-Douglas added that often there was not enough information to triage the patient properly. And remember Pat? She explained how she had to go to the emergency room to get care because of her long wait.

You might think that involving many people in the redesign of a system would lead to chaos and confusion. Why not just get 20 smart people together and let them fix it? But just the opposite happened as a result of activities like "walking a patient" through the system. In this activity, one person is a patient and the whole group learns firsthand about their experiences as they get bounced around the system. Self-interest melts away as people learn that they are both the cause and the recipient of system disconnects. **Soon everyone realized that if things were going to change, the patient needed to be at the center of the system.** Those 250 participants, instead of contributing to chaos and confusion, became advocates for change throughout the system, and the reason for change did not have to be sold to them.



All of this happened as a result of using our Conference

Model® process for change. The conference process helped to build a community of connected people who worked tirelessly to implement the new referral system. It began with our working with leadership to identify a clear purpose and boundaries for the process. The purpose they developed was: *to broadly engage people in the health system to collectively redesign the referral process between primary care and medical specialists, so that it supports communication and improves patient care.* This became the North Star to guide people through the process, not allowing them to stray off course into other areas. We worked hand-in-hand with a design team which included doctors, nurses, staff, and patients to design the various engagement activities, including how to recruit people to attend, the design of the conferences themselves, and the implementation process. Allison Bichel played a key role as consultant and project manager.

Today, doctors and staff are able to provide effective and timely care to more people like Pat Gilroy. This is important because long wait times to see specialists can have life-threatening consequences for patients with pressing medical issues.

If you try conferencing in your organization, you may see dramatic and innovative process improvements that are implemented rapidly and save time and money. You will also gain the most lasting benefit of all: improved engagement throughout the organization that will help you solve tomorrow's issues.

The Adventures of Clockman



[Watch Clockman on You Tube](#) as he seeks to engage a cat, help a falling skier, and play in a band! It's very entertaining, and all the while, you'll get some useful information about employee engagement.

Webinars

The Organization Development Network featured Dick and Emily Axelrod in their Masterful Conversations Series. Click on [Engagement is the New Execution](#) to purchase their webinar.

And our free [Healthcare webinar](#) and [Conference Model](#)

[webinars](#) (search for "Conference Model" to find multiple programs) are also available from Uliveandlearn.com.

Check out previous recordings:

[The Philosophic Consultant](#): with Peter Koestenbaum and the Nexus for Change group.

[Engagement Tools](#): Bookends interview of Dick Axelrod by Susan Stamm

Axelrod Sightings

[February 4, 2010 - Rebuilding Morale and Engagement During Difficult Times / Chicago](#)



Dick will participate in this panel discussion sponsored by the University of Chicago's Graham School for General Studies to be held on **Thursday, February 4 from 6:15p - 8:00p at The University of Chicago Gleacher Center, 450 N. Cityfront Plaza, Concourse Level.**

Economic downturns, especially when accompanied by layoffs, shake up employee morale. Senior HR directors and instructors from the Graham School's Strategic Talent Management and Organizational Design Certificate map out approaches to rebuilding morale and reengaging employees.

Topics to be discussed include:

Importance of leadership transparency and building trust.

Increasing opportunities for employee communication and feedback.

Creative ways to address employee stress related to hyper-lean organization.

How to reward and incentivize employee engagement in tough economic times.

Come to share your questions, concerns, and insights regarding this important topic. Please bring colleagues and members of your team.

Attendance is free.

Please RSVP to bppnews@uchicago.edu.

May 6, 2010 - Leading the Organization Design Process / Denver

Dick will be presenting this session at the [Organization Design Forum's Annual Conference](#), May 4 - 6, 2010. **His session is scheduled for 12:30p on Thursday, May 6. [Register now!](#)**

Quick Tips for a Green PC

Ted Giesler, President of [Cypress Consulting Group, Ltd.](#), offers these tips to save energy and extend battery time:



The Display - In order to reduce energy consumption and in particular battery consumption, it is recommended to not change the standard configuration set by the manufacturer. Another important factor in energy consumption as regards the screen is its brightness. It's natural to write in black on a white sheet, but a very bright page is heavy on consumption, and strains the eyes. Therefore, experts suggest that screen brightness be reduced until your eyes are comfortable. In this way, especially for laptops, battery consumption can be greatly reduced and battery life lengthened.

PC hibernation mode - The most effective way of reducing consumption when your PC is not in use is to put it in hibernate mode. Rather than shutting down your PC every day, restarting it, then re-opening all of your applications, it is much better to "suspend" PC activity, because energy consumption in this mode is roughly 5 watts for a desktop PC and 1 watt for a

laptop.

Switch off the Wi-Fi antenna - Today's laptops and some desktop models are equipped with antennas for transmitting and receiving data via radio waves using hotspots, to allow Internet browsing in bars, airports, at work, or in the home. Radio antennas consume a lot of energy and battery power when they kick into operation. Disabling the antenna when you don't need to browse the internet prolongs battery life.

Columbia University's PPOD



It's not too early to sign up for this year's program, which will begin in the fall of 2010 (exact dates TBD).

Barbara Bunker and Dick Axelrod are core faculty for this terrific program, [Professional Practices in Organization Development](#). Yes, it is terrific (even if we do say so ourselves). Seats are limited, so [sign up now](#).

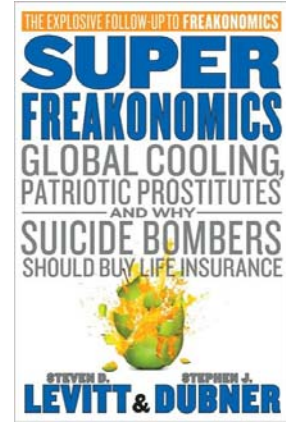
You can also bring PPOD to your organization or local community. For more information, contact [Frank Golom](#), 800.290.3664.

New Books We Really Like

Superfreakonomics (Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner)

This book challenges the way we think. It is a great combination of storytelling and smart thinking. By examining how people respond to incentives, the authors show the world for what it is. They tackle issues like why doctors are so bad at washing their hands, climate change, the costs and benefits of chemotherapy, and whether people are hard-wired for altruism or selfishness.

The big contribution is broadening our thinking about issues.



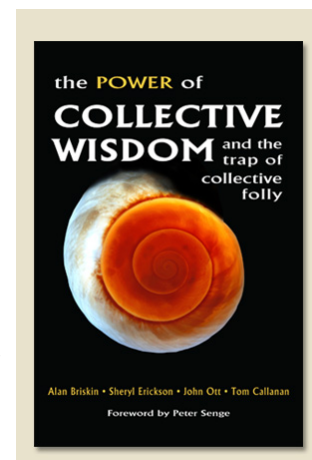
Customize Don't Minimize Your Retirement (Diane B. Burman and Donald C. Strauss)

"What? Me Retire? You must be joking!" No joke...yes, you can retire and be happy. Explore real world solutions to transform your life to a lifestyle that best fits your means and your dreams for the

future. *Customize...don't minimize...Your Retirement: 7 Paths to Explore Possibilities, Choices, and Your Future Happiness* is a self-help guidebook that contains 8 chapters chock-full of information on the latest research and trends. It deals with career considerations, relationships, goal setting, use of leisure time, future housing and health needs, as well as the financial aspects of retirement. More than 80 unique and thought-provoking self-discovery exercises offer purpose, hope, and meaning to create a satisfying and fulfilling retirement. The guidebook is easy to follow and use. It promotes action by encouraging you to make choices and decisions regarding your future. To learn more, click on

www.customizeyourretirement.com.

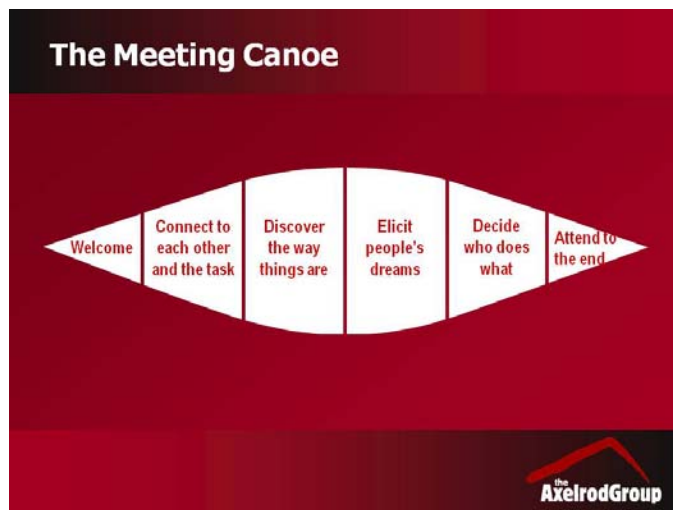
The Power of Collective Wisdom and the Trap of Collective Folly (Alan Briskin, Sheryl Erickson, John Ott,



and Tom Callanan)

Based on 9 years of research, *The Power of Collective Wisdom* shows how we can reliably tap into the extraordinary co-creative potential that exists whenever human beings gather together. Stories and historical examples illustrate how collective wisdom has emerged in a range of cultures, settings, and traditions, and the authors offer a set of practices to help readers realize the key lessons of the book. Equally important, the book describes how to recognize the pitfalls of polarization or false agreement that lead to collective folly. Ultimately, this work emerges from a deep conviction that we all have a stake in each other and that what binds us together can be greater than what drives us apart. We have known Alan Briskin for many years, and the depth of his and his co-authors' knowledge and experience shines through over and over again throughout this well-written book. Their web site is worth a look as well: www.thepowerofcollectivewisdom.com.

Can a Canoe Surf?



Do you have ideas for engaging meetings? Do you have activities you would like to share? Do you need ideas for your next meeting?

Then we invite you visit our [Meeting Canoe Wiki](#). This is an open source project, where you can post ideas and activities that have worked with others, and where you can go for free tips and information.

We'd love to have your contribution.

We're listening...

Do you visit our web site?
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