



The History of the Organization Design Forum

The **Organization Design Forum** has a proud history of more than a quarter century. It was first known as *The Association for the Management of Organization Design (AMOD)* when it was incorporated in 1989 by a group of early organization design practitioners. It was led by Dan Duncan, an industrial psychologist, who held the first public seminars on practices and cases in organization design in the 1980's. Contingency theory and socio-technical systems design, behavioral psychology, the social sciences, and the emerging complexity of multi-national corporations, inspired deep interest in organization design in the 1970's and 80's. That organization structure and process are *contingent on* organization strategy and environment was an accepted principle and was promoted by leading consulting firms such as McKinsey, and reflected in Jay Galbraith's STAR Model™.

By the 1990's, Jay Galbraith and other major thought leaders began attending and speaking at AMOD conferences, and global business leaders such as Fred Smith from FedEx led the establishment of organization design as an internal business function. AMOD became a national forum for a growing community of organization design practitioners to present case studies and exchange ideas on the relationships among organization strategy, structure, process and culture.

With increased globalization and the emerging dominance of systems thinking, organization designers began tackling the increased complexity of business organizations. AMOD Board members decided to rebrand the organization, de-emphasizing its industrial psychology and "mechanistic" roots and emphasizing a more open, systemic approach to design. This was reflected in the ODF *7-Step Design™* workshop, a practitioner-developed process for organization design. In 2001, *The Organization Design Forum* was formed to invite even more global participation and create a true community of practice on the systemic nature of organizations. By the early 2000's, large-group design approaches, customer-centricity, self-organization, organizational agility and network design were embedded in the work of organization designers and reflected at ODF conference rosters. A sister community, the UK Organization Design Forum was born in 2003.

During the last 10 years, there has been increased focus on adaptive work systems, sustainability, digital and e-commerce design, big data and complexity theory, while continuing and expanding on the work of leaders like Jay Galbraith. By 2010, ODF communities of practice were thriving in Europe and Africa. As the world became more digital, so did ODF, and the ODF Board formed "open" platforms for both the website and the membership, resulting in the global dialogue and growth currently reflected the ODF global and regional conferences, social networks and blogs. In 2015, ODF attracts world-wide participation in a community focusing on organization design principles, tools and methods and ways to engage its stakeholders for designing for the future. The Organization Design Forum continues to be the leading practitioner-based organization design community in the world.