

Originator-Organzier-Operator

July 2013 – Some meetings you can just tell are going to be good! Like the one I had a few weeks ago.

Breakfast with good friends, served with a side of spicy Texas sausage compliments of Jake's Roadhouse, and a conversation about developing a mentoring ministry for engaged couples at our church. Can't beat it!

The front end of our early morning huddle was all about vision—thinking and dreaming out loud about the possibilities. What is the best way to come alongside couples who are preparing to launch a lifetime of love and commitment?

After some invigorating discussion, it was time to move from ideas to implementation—from big picture to action items—and who would own the resulting next steps.

As you can imagine, this was a very vital part of our process. To see our emerging ministry move forward productively, it was imperative to do a good job of matching the various action items with the right person—to do the best we could to distribute “to dos” in a manner compatible with each person's strengths and gifts.

To get there, we put into play a construct that at once not only deepened our partnership with each other but enabled us to readily align next steps with the right person. Let me share this very useful construct with you—something that I added to my toolkit several years ago through an executive coaching program led by Bob Shank called The Master's Program. (Thank you, Bob!).

Effective executives build on strengths—their own strengths, the strengths of their superiors, colleagues, and subordinates.

—Peter Drucker

In short, the construct goes like this: There are three overall categories that pinpoint the unique contribution each person brings to a given project or endeavor: Originator, Organizer, and Operator. Let me unpack the three Os.

- **Originator** – The originator is the idea person. Originators roll out more ideas before their first Frappuccino than many people do in a year. It's how they are wired. They live in

tomorrow—the land of possibilities. They are energized by concepts and get bogged down by details. Key words for the originator are: dream, envision, innovate.

- **Organizer** – The organizer is the strategy person. Organizers love to take great ideas and create the game plan to make them become reality. They are motivated by the chance to draft out a blueprint. Their natural bent is to develop strategies, set up systems, identify the profile of those who need to form the team. Key words for the organizer are: develop, build, strategize.
- **Operator** – The operator is the tactical person. Operators find fulfillment in making things happen. They love to run things, manage, measure. They have a built-in knack for making things work—effectively and efficiently. They effortlessly problem solve and trouble shoot. Key words for the operator are: manage, execute, deliver.

Of course, this construct is ‘art’ not ‘science’. Some will find they live in between the Os—a hybrid of sorts, sharing a combination of these traits. But the value here is that it furnishes a way of thinking and planning. And it provides a common language for a team to kick around about how to leverage its partnership.

One of the key applications of this construct is to note that every endeavor will require the contribution of each type of person—originator, organizer, operator. But keep in mind, each will come to bat at various stages of the project. For example, our breakfast meeting had a good mix of originators and organizers, which was spot on for envisioning and strategizing; but as we began to talk about implementation, we realized quickly that we needed to add an operator to our team—someone who thinks in terms of execution. You get the picture.

In short, one of the great privileges of leadership is to rally the right people at the right time.

The originators—those who dream.

The organizers—those who design.

And the operators—those who deliver.

Share how you have seen this construct at work in your partnerships?

Jump into the conversation. Post your comments below.