

From Management Development to Organization Development with *IMpact*¹

by Henry Mintzberg

It has been said that you should never send a changed person back to an unchanged organization. In management development programs, we always do. That is because we disconnect the learner from the natural context of his or her learning, namely the workplace back home. As a consequence, we emphasize leadership, apart—“participant-focused.” What we need instead is learning that is *community*-focused, and *impact*-focused, to develop better organizations *in the process* of developing better managers, rather than just hoping that this will happen as a consequence of having developed them.

We had been working on this for fifteen years, with some successes, until we realized recently what had been holding us back—and others too. No matter how supported were the managers participating in our programs, even in teams of colleagues from their own organization, when they went back to their workplaces, each was alone, with no evident way to connect that learning to their context, and use it to make changes. So why not back them up with impact teams back home, made up of people they work with every day, to extend the learning for greater management development, and the implications of that learning for more serious organization development.

¹ Thanks to Kristien Weidenmann of Lufthansa especially for the diagrams

We have labeled this *IMpact*, because it constitutes a pact for development between the manager on the program and his or her virtual team back home. This article explains, first our early efforts at impact, then how we came to *IMpact*, and finally how it can work powerfully for development in and of organizations.

Self in Silo, or Representative of a Community?

Picture yourself sitting in a classroom, whether at an internal training facility or in some public institution, such as a management school. You are there to be developed, sent by your organization to become a better manager. Fair enough, but not far enough.

So picture yourself instead as participating there on *behalf* of your organization, to make it a better place. Replace the image of having been parachuted in, sitting in your silo (Figure 1a), with that of you as a conduit between your company and the classroom, to carry the learning back for impact as well as to bring the concerns of your company into the classroom for further development (Figure 1b).

Of course, aside from programs to develop managers, which usually pay less attention to developing their organizations—as in the case of many of the Advanced Management Programs in the prestigious business schools—are programs to develop the organization that pay less attention to developing the managers in them—as perhaps in General Electric’s Work-Out (see Ulrich et al., 2002) or Reg Revens’ Action Learning (1983). We created programs on both sides of this divide, but only when we put together our learning from them did we discover *IMpact*. We discuss these programs in turn before considering the synergy we found among them.

The IMPM: Shared Reflection for Management Education and Development

In 1996, questioning the inadequacies of conventional MBA programs (see my book *Managers not MBAs*, 2004), a group of us from five universities around the world established the International Masters in Practicing Management (IMPM.org). It had two ambitious objectives: to convert business education into management education, combined with management development, and to connect both with organization development. We succeeded in the first quite quickly, it has taken us longer to crack the nut of the second.

As I elaborate in my new book *Managing* (Mintzberg, 2009), management is a practice, rooted in experience, not a science rooted in analysis or a profession rooted in training. So it makes little sense to try and create managers in a classroom, let alone leaders. What does make sense is to take people who *are* practicing management and enhance that practice by encouraging them to learn from their own experience: to reflect on it personally and share those reflections with open-minded colleagues.

Accordingly, the IMPM has been designed for managers in practice, who go back and forth between their managing and their learning (in five modules of ten days each, over sixteen months). This enables them to bring fresh experience into the classroom for reflection as well as to carry their insights back to the workplace for action. Given how busy most managers are these days, we set out, insofar as possible, to *use* their work rather than *make* more work.

A tiered classroom, in which everyone faces the “instructor,” may be good for discussing a case—other peoples’ experience—but not for managers to develop and share insights from their own experience. Hence the IMPM sits its managers at round tables in a flat room, to facilitate discussion in small groups, which become communities of social learning in their own right. No need to “break out”: the class can switch to small discussion groups on a moment’s notice—which make up about half the class time.

Managers have mostly been sent to the IMPM by their companies, sometimes in groups so that they could reflect on common concerns around the tables. Lufthansa, Fujitsu, Panasonic, LG, and Alcan (now Rio Tinto) have been sending teams to the IMPM for most or all of our 14 years. (See Figure 2, on why Lufthansa, in their own words, have been doing so.)

We have had considerable success in developing these managers: the overwhelming response of our graduates has been that the IMPM is a “life-changing” experience. One participating manager polled her colleagues at the end of the program on this very phase and found that all but one agreed with it—the one wasn’t sure “yet”! Organization development, however, was another story.

IMPact We were determined that the learning of the classroom be carried into the workplace for three kinds of impacts. The first is *coaching impact*, meaning that learners in the classroom should be coaches back home in their organizations, to diffuse what they learn to others. The second is *action impact*, meaning that the managers should also be driving changes in their company as a result of what they learned. And the third, combining the first two, could be called *refl’active impact* (a word coined by one of our

participating managers) describing the manager's long-lasting capacity to deal with complex issues as a consequence of having become more open-mindedly reflective. We labeled these three efforts IMPact, and instituted a number of other components in the program to encourage them:

- Some time after each module, the managers write a *reflection paper* to link what they learned to themselves, their job, and/or their organization. Many of these have proved to be surprisingly extensive and insightful.
- At a number of the modules, the managers undertake one day *field studies*, usually to the companies represented in the classroom, to probe into issues identified by their colleagues there.
- Between the third and fourth modules, the managers' pair up and do a *managerial exchange*, to spend the better part of a week at each others' workplaces, as guest and host, to enhance their understanding of another managerial world. This has become one of the most popular components of the program.
- Alone or in groups, the managers have undertaken a *venture* to make a significant change in their organization or enhance a change already underway as a consequence of their learning. Ventures at Lufthansa, for example, have included setting up a program to mentor senior executives in the use of the internet and redesigning the strategy process for the airline business. Each manager also does a *final paper*, to probe into some issue, usually related to a concern at work.

Some of these components obviously make work—the program does, after all, give a masters degree—but we have designed them (a) to blend into what the managers are doing naturally, and (b) to be as compelling as possible in terms of the managers' own needs. And these needs have also encouraged the managers to undertake a variety of coaching and action impacts on their own initiative, for example:

- Two Royal Bank of Canada managers replicated parts of the modules with their staff back home, while at Panasonic some of the module learning was debriefed in “Friday Forums.” At Lufthansa, one manager made summaries of the modules which he discussed with his team in monthly coaching sessions.
- An LG manager, upon hearing at a module about novel ways to take down the partitions between desks, called home to have this change made before he returned.
- Upon his return from a related program², the manager of a Mexican factory installed a round table on the floor so that he and his team could reflect on issues as they arose.
- A Motorola manager sent “electronic postcards” home during the modules, to keep his colleagues and family informed of his learning.
- A group around another manager from Motorola was so impressed with the managerial exchange visit of a guest from Lufthansa that a number of them upped and went to Lufthansa for their own exchange.
- Many of the participants, of course, have shared particular readings and PowerPoints with colleagues back home, while some have chosen to do the

² EMBA Roundtables, where managers from EMBA programs around the world get together for a one week IMPM experience (see www.business-school.exeter.ac.uk/executive/roundtables).

same with their reflection papers. The Lufthansa School of Business has been encouraging its participants to publish (on a knowledge database in the intranet) these papers on a voluntary basis.

Yet something was still missing. There was a lot of push in this—faculty encouraging impacts—but not enough pull: spontaneous efforts by the managers to change their organizations. Why should that be so, in this and other management development programs? We found out when we reflected on our learning from two other programs that were inspired by the IMPM.

The ALP: Organization Development in the Classroom through Friendly Consulting

We created the *Advanced* Leadership Program to offer the IMPM experience—reflecting at round tables and doing field studies, etc.—to managers who could not spare the time required for a masters program. But in so doing, we shifted the experience toward organization development, in the classroom. We did this by inviting companies to send teams of six managers—the ALP sells tables, not chairs—each with a key issue of concern to the company. Example of the ones brought include “how do we motivate our first-line employees” and “how do we understand and improve decentralization within our organization.”

At three modules of a week each (the middle one sometimes taking place within each company), spread over about six months, the managers’ work on these issues within and across their teams, the latter in a process we call “friendly consulting.” In

effect, every issue is everyone else's issue, in the sense that all the managers have lived with such concerns. And so they are able to help each other work them through, which they do with great enthusiasm. Better than a busman's holiday!

The details of the ALP are described on www.alp-impm.com, but one example can show both how it works and what is its potential. A field visit was arranged to the company concerned about motivating its first line employees—a passenger railroad. The friendly consultant bought tickets, rode the trains, and interviewed managers at various levels. They returned home to report that the company did not need to motivate those employees—they were plenty motivated. Rather they suggested that it use those employees to further motivate its managers. Asked if she thought the same thing was happening in her own company, one of the friendly consultants answered: "Exactly!"—they just never did a field study at home. Another ALP team from this railroad went on over the course of two years to drive major changes on the issue of customer service (as described in *Triple Impact Coaching*, Patwell and Seashore, 2006). So organization development can work fine in a classroom, as General Electric had found out earlier with Work-Out.

CoachingOurselves: Management Development with Organization Development in the Workplace

The second initiative was also inspired by the IMPM, but back in the workplace itself and not by any faculty member or management development person.

The engineering manager of a high technology company in Montreal found that his new managers were struggling with their jobs. Having become familiar with the IMPM

(he later did it), he decided to use these ideas on his own. He had no budget for training, or support for this from corporate, so he simply brought his managers together informally over lunch, for about 90 minutes every week or two, to reflect together on their experiences, drawing on conceptual materials from the management literature.

This went on for about two years, with great success: members of the original team created teams of their own, and the teams drove various changes in their workplaces. Eventually, the person who started all this, with myself and two others, founded www.CoachingOurselves.com to enable managers from other companies to do the same thing. They form teams, download topics (fifty are available, on subjects such as “Silos and Slabs on Organizations”, “Dealing with the Pressures of Managing”, “Time for Dialogue”), and work together, much as did that first group. Each topic asks the team to pursue the action implications of its learning. Companies such as Fujitsu are now using CoachingOurselves to help drive major change in some of its divisions.

So the ALP program brought organization development into the classroom and CoachingOurselves brought management and organization development back to the workplace. It was but a small though significant step to realize how these could be combined with an IMPM-type program to crack the nut of impact.

Back-home *IMPact* teams

In 2009, after an IMPM module, a group of faculty met with HR representatives from two of the companies represented in the class, Kristien Weidenmann of Lufthansa (who oversees the IMPM activity in the company) and Danielle Hudon of Rio Tinto, to brainstorm about these issues. Impact was on our minds: the last day of the module had

been spent discussing with the class how to achieve it, including using CoachingOurselves as a bridge to the workplace. During the module, a number of faculty had been referred to the Lufthansa airline as an example, only to discover that one member of its team managed in corporate finance, another in IT, the third in technic. It occurred to us that, while they were working together on a common project and were coaching each other on certain business issues, after each module, unlike the members of CoachingOurselves teams, they went back to their own workplaces.

Dora Koop of McGill had an idea about linking the IMPM ventures to teams back at work, and at the meeting Danielle Hudon took this a step further by suggesting the establishment of teams at work behind each of the managers participating in the program. In effect, why not create a virtual team to do the program too, by proxy, through each manager in the program? One gets the degree, the others, certificates.

Kristien Weidenmann stressed that by linking such a team to each IMPM participant, this would benefit Lufthansa's aim of retaining and promoting its high potential talent. And by creating virtual teams across the company, it would moreover improve the bonding and knowledge transfer in its overall structure. Danielle Hudon added that introducing web lectures and e-learning modules would serve Rio Tinto's aim of having approximately 50% of learning taking place on a virtual basis.

Moreover, these back-home teams could leverage the learning from the classroom into the workplace. For one thing, every manager sent on the program could be helping to develop five or more others. For another, these teams could be the natural pathways from insights to actions, as has been happening in CoachingOurselves. While a team in the classroom is rarely a team back in the organization, a team around the manager at

work is a natural team—and a potential community of learning and development—since it is made up of people who work together all the time.

As I have described in “Rebuilding Companies as Communities” (*Harvard Business Review*, July-August, 2009), small teams at middle management levels may be more effective at changing many an organization than concentrated efforts from the “top”. Such managers can be remarkably committed to the enterprise, and sometimes ideally connected as well: close enough to the operations, where ideas often originate (and get lost), yet able to appreciate the big picture. Bear in mind that many a big strategy has grown out of a little initiative, as when a worker at IKEA had to remove the legs from a table to get it into his car, and there followed the revelation about selling unassembled furniture.

Thus was born *IMpact*, a pact between the manager in a learning program and the team he or she designates on the job—of reports, peers, associates, whoever makes the most sense—for management development carried into organization development.

Architecture for Anchoring *IMpact*

How to make this happen? CoachingOurselves offers an obvious place to start, since it sets up the teams in the workplace that meet on a regular basis, using learning materials on the topics. (Many of these CoachingOurselves learning materials have in fact been inspired by IMPM course materials.) So why not use the CoachingOurselves topics and format to carry some of the classroom learning to the virtual team in the workplace.

But this is only the beginning. Every IMPM activity, or those in similar development programs, can be brought into such *IMpact* teams. For example:

- The field studies can be organized by the *IMpact* teams, which can also participate in their debrief.
- The *IMpact* team can host the managerial exchange partner, and sometimes even return together for the guest visit.
- A venture or other project can be carried out by the entire *IMpact* team and not just the manager attending the program.
- Issues arising in the classroom that seem relevant for the company can be brought back to the *IMpact* team for consideration and action, while what results from this can be taken back to the classroom for friendly consulting.
- Where convenient, an *IMpact* team can be brought into a module, for direct exposure to the IMPM philosophy of refl'active learning. Or else it can sit in on specific web lectures, held during a class module.
- Various *IMpact* teams in the same company can meet in a forum to consolidate their learning and share their insights about the whole company, perhaps with senior management in attendance (much as General Electric has done in Work-Out). This can lead to major transformation. (Figure 3 illustrates much of this in terms of coaching, action, and refl'active impacts.)

Five Years to Go

Isn't it time we got past the lone wolf view of development, that a changed individual will magically change an organization. The anthropologist Marguerite Mead wrote

famously: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” Send a changed manager back to a team of thoughtful, committed colleagues and watch how an organization changes.

I hope I have conveyed the enthusiasm that has driven our efforts, in our schools, classrooms, and participating companies. The latter are now selecting participants for the fifteenth IMPM cohort, and we are encouraging them to be accompanied by their own *IMPact* teams.

It has been said that a new technology takes twenty years to become an overnight success. Maybe that is because we all need time to figure out what each new technology really means, as well as how it can really work. Check us out in 2015.

**Figure 1a: Model I – Self in a Development Program:
Parachuted in and out**

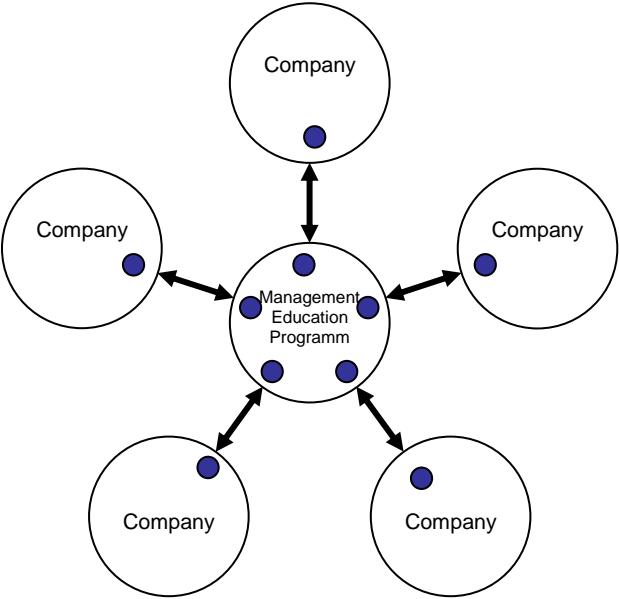


Figure 1b: Model II – Representative of a Development Community: in, out, and in between

Development Community
in, out and inbetween

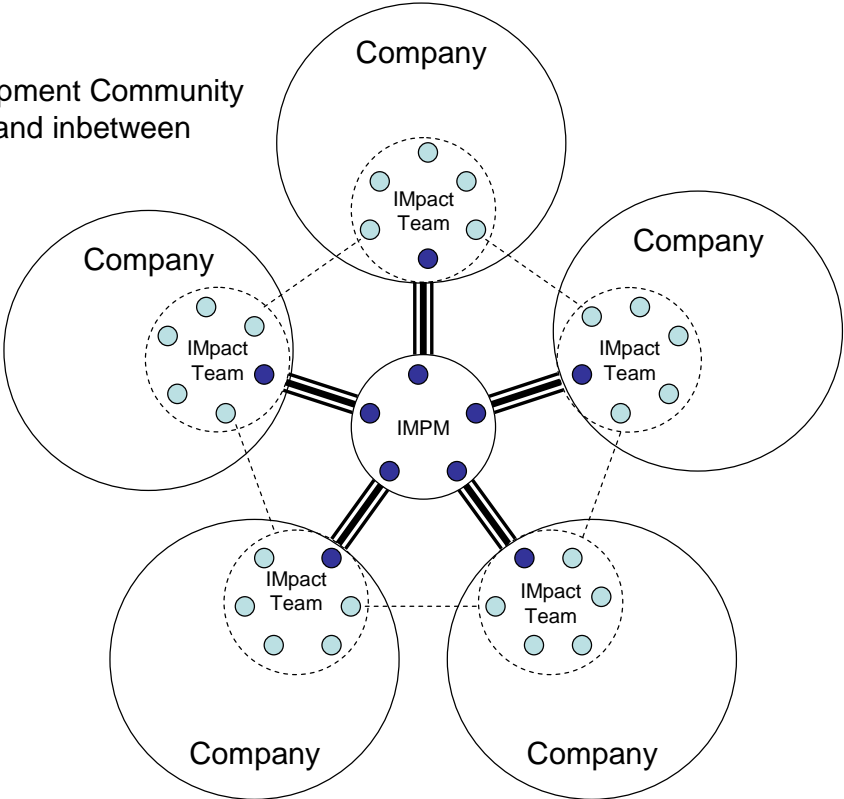


Figure 2: Why has Lufthansa sent people to the IMPM since 13 years?

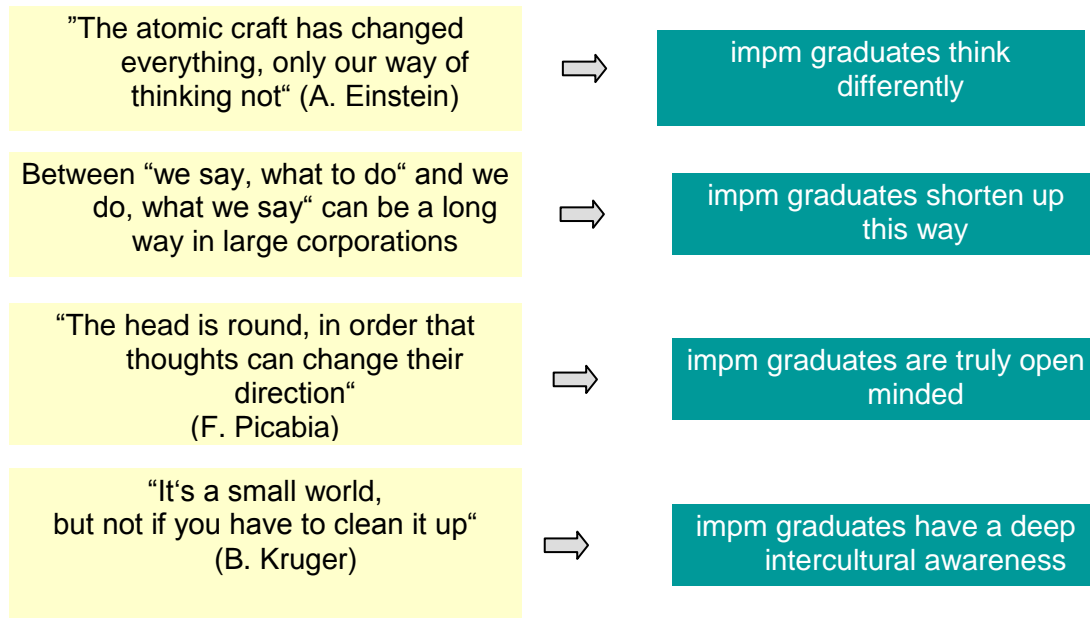
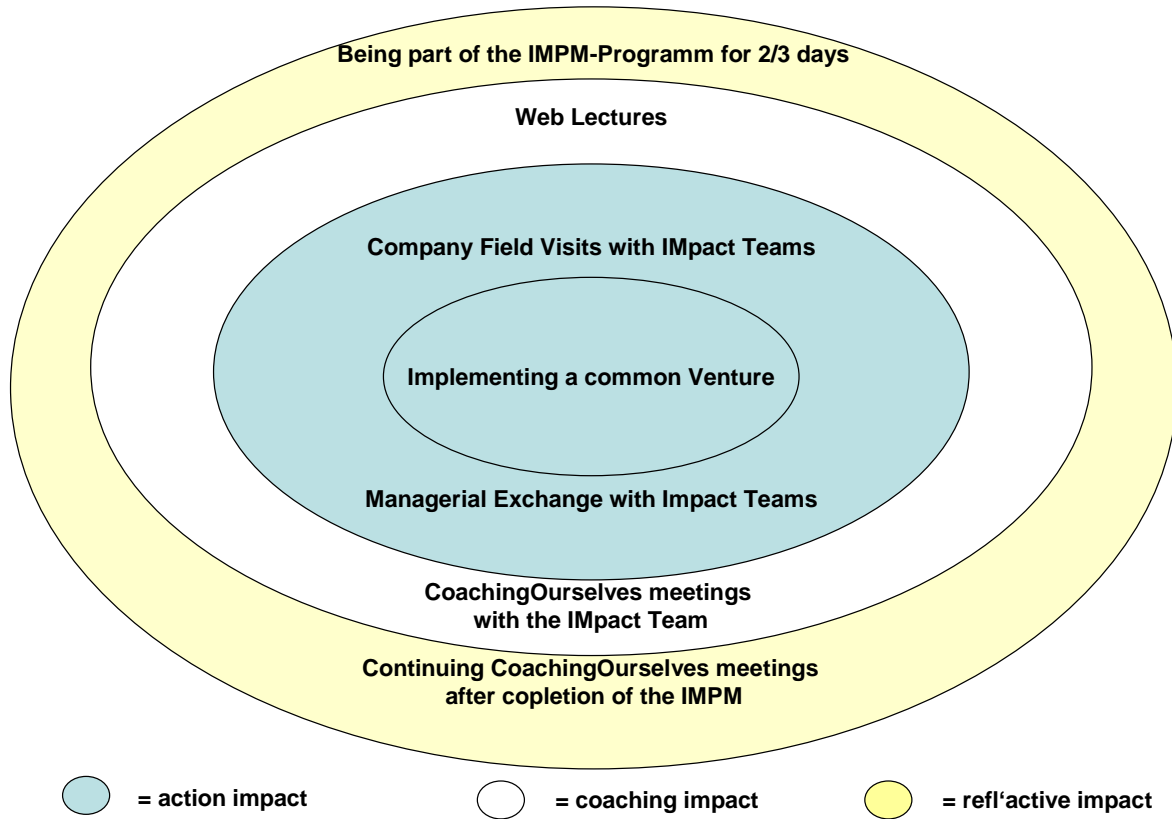


Figure 3: Anchoring Impact with Company *IM*act Teams



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