10 TIPS FOR INTERACTING WITH ORGANIZATIONAL SYSTEMS

1. **Know your role.** You may be there to mediate, advise, facilitate, or "stir the pot." Understand your place in the system.

2. **Clarify where you fit.** Barry Oshry sees organizations as having Tops (executives), Middles (managers), and Bottoms (workers). Be sure you know which part of the organization's hierarchical system you are interacting with.

3. **Have sector-specific expertise.** While it may not be necessary for all the work you do, sector-specific expertise helps you understand the language and culture of the organizational system.

4. **Understand when your job is done.** Know when it is time to exit; avoid being a "hanger-on" as described by Rick Johnson in Consultants Can be Scary.

5. **Recognize some of the system will be hidden, or unavailable.** As an "outsider" there will be limits to how much of the system you can see or access, yet those hidden parts may impact your work.

6. **Remember you can only recommend change.** You can't force a system to change prematurely, regardless of how much the change needs to occur.

7. **Access your allies; know your naysayers.** Recognize who, in the system, can help your work and who might need convincing.

8. **Define expectations up front.** Identify needs, set goals, and establish clear outcomes before you begin. This will help you clarify when your job is complete

9. **Identify places you can intervene.** In Thinking in Systems, Meadows outlines key leverage points or points of power. She reminds us that leverage points are often not intuitive – be sure the place you are intervening will produce the desired result.

10. **Use your network.** The other systems you are connected to may be inaccessible to your clients without you as a liaison.

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