

## What Kind of OD Practitioner Are You?

I recently had occasion to post to an OD discussion list a framework for categorizing four basic kinds of OD practitioners. The framework, a 2 x 2 matrix, arrays hard vs. soft OD against the locus of the practice, that is, internal or external. This produces the grid shown below.

“Soft” OD refers to the classic tools: teambuilding, group facilitation, conflict management, etc.

“Hard” OD refers to the socio-technical stream of OD, including organizational design, process design and improvement, work design and redesign, and large-scale change management.

Internal OD practitioners are typically found in one of three areas: as part of Training & Development; as a stand-alone OD unit; and as an Organizational Effectiveness unit. In the first two cases, the OD is typically of the “soft” variety (SI). OE units are typically practicing “hard” OD (HI).

External OD practitioners fall into two groups as well: those practicing “soft” OD (SE) and those practicing “hard” OD (HE).

It’s my guess that whether internal or external, those practicing “hard” OD find more favor with senior execs and other managers focused on measurably and often tangibly improving performance, whether of people, processes or the bottom line. Moreover, I’d also guess that HE OD consultants are probably the best paid.

It’s been my observation that SI OD practitioners typically find themselves in supporting roles of limited influence and, in some cases, they have been there primarily for show, so an exec can say, “Yeah, we have an OD unit.” SE practitioners are still in vogue and on occasion work in the rarified atmosphere of the executive suite but these are few and far between.

In short, the field of OD is marked by two splits: one between the kind of practice and one between the locus of the practice.

What kind of OD practitioner are you?

		Locus of Practice	
		<i>Internal</i>	<i>External</i>
Kind of Practice	<i>Soft</i>	SI	SE
	<i>Hard</i>	HI	HE

**Figure 1 - OD Typology Grid**