

HOW TO WORK WELL IN THE NHS

Two thought-provoking and practical sessions for people working in the NHS to:
a) better navigate the system and b)
contribute more significantly to the
development and delivery of services.

Hosted by Mark Cole
and John Higgins



**A better role for
OD in the NHS:
Tapping into
collective ability**

23 April 2024, 0930-1100

1 May 2024, 1500-1630

9 May 2024, 0930-1100

**Politics with a
purpose: Engaging
with the rules of the
game to change the
rules of the game in
the NHS**

5 April 2024, 0930-1130

About your hosts



John Higgins

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John is a widely published researcher into what it takes for people to find their voice – and how organisations can engage with their collective intelligence.

He works extensively with Megan Reitz, Associate Fellow at Said Business School, University of Oxford, and Adjunct Professor at Hult International Business School.

Their work on employee activism has seen them shortlisted for recognition by the Thinkers 50 (which recognises the leading management thinkers in the world) as well as showcased by Brene Brown, the Sloan Management Review and the Harvard Business Review.

The second edition of their seminal work *Speak Up* appears this spring, and continues to be endorsed by Professor Amy Edmondson, author of this year's FT Book of the Year and renowned champion for the importance of psychological safety in the workplace. John also appeared on BBC Radio 4's *The Bottom Line* looking at how organisations get themselves stuck by denying the reality of what they are doing.

With Mark, John has co-authored two books. The first – entitled *Leadership Unravelling* – explores what the writers take to be the faulty thinking at the heart of modern management. This investigates key paradoxes and myths in organisational life that can be seen to constrain our thinking in a corporate context.

Last year, they published *The Great Unheard at Work*, a detailed exploration of voice and silence in organisational life. They continue to work together to explore this crucial topic through careful attention at all of the various nuanced issues that fall under this general heading.

Mark has worked in and around the NHS in England for nearly forty years. His roles throughout that career have ranged from employment development through people development to leadership & organisational development.

He now offers his experience and expertise on a freelance basis but until recently he worked at the NHS London Leadership Academy, where he led across the capital on systems leadership and organisation development. His focus is on working with people in organisational spaces to explore the dynamics of power in the workplace.

In 2012, he completed his doctorate in education at the University of Greenwich, where his thesis explored the relationship between reflective practice in healthcare and neoliberal governmentality. He has published a number of articles and a book chapter on this topic, some of which are available via his ResearchGate page.

He is a visiting lecturer at the business school at the University of Hertfordshire and also does some teaching at the University of the West of England. For the former, he has just recently been designing and developing the OD and Change module of the global executive MBA at Hertfordshire.

Mark is also a Chartered Fellow of the CIPD and is the author of a book entitled *Radical Organisation Development*, a personal reflection on his field of work and its shortcomings, alongside a commitment to try to do OD differently and in a way that truly looks to deliver on the democratic and humanistic underpinnings that are often cited in the practice but rarely realised in practice.

A better role for OD in the NHS

Tapping into collective ability

OD in the NHS is a dumping ground for managerial problems. But it could be a place where persistent challenges get worked through – by people better qualified than external consultants to engage with the realities of the NHS. But there is a long way to go if NHS OD is going to be seen as the excellent consulting partner it could be.

The potential for OD is far from being understood by NHS managers and leaders, who tend to offload difficult people issues not to OD but onto HR; and when it is apparent that that issue extends beyond pay, rations, and misbehaviour, HR then dumps it onto people labelled as OD experts.

OD practitioners also tend to self-marginalise, amplifying the way in which managers (mis)treat the practice, by having in-house disagreements as to what good OD looks like. For some, it is a management function that needs to be focused on the priorities of the business; for others, there is a seemingly circus-like feel to the work, with people using it to entertain the troops (OD as edutainment).

Why is this important? Because the collective intelligence of the NHS is not being engaged with, and this is precisely where OD could make a significant contribution.

Instead, because professional services companies spend a good deal of time and effort on building their (often illusory) credibility, senior leaders are transfixed by what they think such firms can offer. Internal OD teams in the NHS spend little time considering their credibility in the eyes of such leaders, instead merely responding to requests to do fragmented pieces of work.

As one NHS OD interviewee explained, even in large-scale change projects, OD tends to be thrown scraps, being allocated to sub-streams of work that tackle culture and leadership.

Now would be a good time to convene conversations that look at the gap between espoused and the actual NHS OD practice. We have the potential to explore how things are and how they could be. Alongside that, we can discuss what we say we do, what we do in practice, and what would give us joy to do. And it needs to be a dialogue that draws us together, generating enough unity in the community, rather than further polarising our professional differences.

In 2022, it is reported that the NHS spent £626mn a year on external consultancies. NHS England alone threw 83mn tax-pounds at these companies. When people discuss privatisation of our health provision, the focus is invariably on clinical services. However, it is in the field of leadership and management – where the service already carries a huge wage bill – that outsourcing is most apparent.

NHS OD is qualified to provide most of the services that are currently sold off to these private companies. And this is a resource for which we are all already paying.

Politics with a purpose

Engaging with the rules of the game to change the rules of the game in the NHS

How do you successfully play the politics in the NHS, so that you can get on with what you want and feel that you need to do in your role?

In facing up to the politics that comes from the way power flows in our health service, our individual response is very often to silence ourselves.

Far too often, we are told – or tell ourselves – that we can buy ourselves time and a degree of autonomy by simply agreeing to “feed the beast”, do what will keep established custom and practice and the people who manage it happy. The problem being that, by these actions, we sustain the beast that bears down on us, demanding food, instead of slaying it.

This event encourages careful consideration instead of how we can collectively work the system to be heard and have the impact that we need to have.

This is not a session that aims to develop people’s political awareness in organisational settings. That approach tends to lead us to a compliance with the status quo. Awareness of the politics too often means biting one’s tongue and playing the game, a game that is stacked against us.

Instead, this event offers insights into how we might find our collective voice and become more active in terms of mustering movements for change at work.

Book Now via Eventbrite

Playing Politics with a purpose: Engaging with the rules of the game to change the rules of the game in the NHS.	5 March 2024	0930-1130	https://www.eventbrite.com/e/780843472847?aff=oddtcreator
A better role for OD in the NHS: Creating spaces for a collective inquiry and intelligence.	23 April 2024	0930-1100	https://www.eventbrite.com/e/781259075927?aff=oddtcreator
A better role for OD in the NHS: Creating spaces for a collective inquiry and intelligence.	1 May 2024	1500-1630	https://www.eventbrite.com/e/781263930447?aff=oddtcreator
A better role for OD in the NHS: Creating spaces for a collective inquiry and intelligence.	9 May 2024	0930-1100	https://www.eventbrite.com/e/781264512187?aff=oddtcreator

Mark is also running his *Unpacking Power* workshop three times in early 2024. For further information or to book your place on one of these, please follow the following Eventbrite links:

6 February 2024 0930-1230

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/776292500767?aff=oddtcreator>

13 March 2024 1330-1630

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/776332731097?aff=oddtcreator>

25 April 2024 0930-1230

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/776334014937?aff=oddtcreator>