

## University of Pennsylvania Organizational Dynamics Summer 2009 newsletter / Jim Reece, MS '95



One look at Jim Reece tells you he is a people person through and through, and if you want to confirm that impression just ask him what he has been doing for the last 30 years!

Originally from the Chicago area, he completed his undergraduate work in Communications Theory at Northern Illinois University and while still in school began to work in Santa's Village in Dundee, Illinois, one of the first theme parks established in North America. His experiences there sparked his interest in what was then called personnel management, or, more precisely, sparked his interest in the "person" part of personnel. "I have always been interested in what happens

to the *individual* in the workplace," he asserts with a grin. "How do you manage the intersection of the individual's interest and the organization's interest to the maximum benefit of both? One often finds debris from the collisions at that juncture but it doesn't have to happen." Just the kind of problem we tackle every day in Organizational Dynamics at Penn!

Jim was a perfect fit with O.D. "The Organizational Dynamics Program was just phenomenal for me. It allowed me the freedom to select the courses I was most interested in. At the same time it taught me how to discipline my thinking. I had been introduced to systems thinking by a professor at Northern, and Organizational Dynamics was clearly running on the same track. Getting to hear about real life on-the-job experiences from other professionals was invaluable to me. Dissecting these real problems and coming up with new solutions was even more so."

His career has found him wearing various hats at various organizations, including the start up of a very successful fitness/wellness center, a coaching/consulting company, a manufacturing company, Kidsports International, banking, and a university. To every job in every organization he has brought his keen curiosity, his sense of humor, and his understanding of systems thinking. He is convinced that a systems approach "brings order to chaos," but in spite of his commitment, after a number of years, his interest in his work, or more specifically his work environments, began to wane. What he saw in the workplace was not what he envisioned the world could look like. He realized that what happens at the aforementioned intersection of individual and institutional interests is, in fact, real life, and we tend to miss its significance "because we are just not paying attention." He found himself looking for a new way to get his ideas into the hands of "people who could really run with them."

Meanwhile his wife, Toni, had worked for several years as a customer quality manager and consultant-cum-coach in her own company, Baysix Training. Interested in working "from the ground up," she was especially effective as a coach on the shop floor, and, like Jim, was concerned with what happens to the individual in the organization. While on coaching assignment in the U.K., she met Neil Annis and Linda Harland, like-minded people who ran a successful coaching business there. The three "decided to take our collective 60 years of experience (personal and business) and create a PEOPLE focused product - [The PEOPLE Model™](#)," a model that proved to be the best way for Jim to get his ideas to those "people who could really run with them" - people who coach. Jim and Toni decided to develop The People Academy, Inc. business in earnest, creating, promoting, and training coaches to use products like The People Model™, together.

Jim explains, "We don't teach 'coaching' skills although we do partner with a proprietary curriculum for those individuals and organizations that need a skill base; we have focused our services on providing the coach with a set of resources that give him, or her, a broader platform for guiding client outcomes. We give their skills a bigger playground. There is already enough material out there on networking, list building, how to make money, etc. Our products, while keeping a system sensibility and being mindful of the all-important shop floor are different in that they are FOR the coach but they're not ABOUT the coach - they're about the client. We are always aiming to help the coach achieve a better - and more appropriate - result with their client."

[The People Academy, Inc.](http://www.thepeopleacademyinc.com) offers several diagnostic tools; a suite of proprietary assessments; a 500-page online resource manual; online tutorials which help reinforce the use of some of these tools; a set of management bulletins for client marketing; and training topics for managers' meetings aimed at how to make managers more coach-like.

The heart of the People Academy approach is the diagnostic People Model™ Framework. You can learn a great deal about this facilitated process based on the acronym PEOPLE on the People Academy, Inc. website at <http://www.thepeopleacademyinc.com/coaching-for-a-better-workplace.html> but, in brief, coaches using the Framework lead clients in exploring the question, “what does great look like?”;

1. Performance - So what DOES great look like? How can you know how to get there if you don't know what it looks like?
2. Efficacy – deals with the power to produce. You now know what good looks like, so what is blocking you from achieving it. Process? Training? Culture? Money? Attitude? This is the coach's employment zone, where the real work is. The coach's goal is not to solve the client's problem but to put it into perspective. What needs to get resolved?
3. Ownership – Taking personal control. “This step takes either 90 seconds or forever!” Jim laughs. “The word ‘Ownership’ is not unlike the word ‘Communication’ where it means everything and at the same time means nothing. We help people think about it differently (i.e. honestly) by placing it into 3 buckets:
  - 1) Accountability: you are accountable only for yourself – your attitudes, beliefs and actions.
  - 2) Responsibility: for tasks assumed and commitments made; and
  - 3) Responsiveness: to those depending on you to complete their own responsibilities.”
4. Possibilities – what would your world look like if we could eliminate or reduce some of the barriers listed in#2.
5. Linkage – Aligning our actions with goals and objectives, using systems thinking.
6. Evidence – How do you know when you're there or have strayed? What's the metric?

Who can benefit from People Academy products and services? Jim replies, “Professional coaches, consultants, teachers, youth ministers, non-profit leadership, and HR and OD folks as well; anyone whose mission is helping another.” In addition it is utilized by small and medium size business for training and internal coach support. And just in case you want some help in your own everyday personal life (or know someone who does), they have come up with *Not Your Mother's Self-Help Book* (with audio-file). They are currently in collaboration with other like minded organizations such as, “[The Get Inspired! Project](#)”, “[The Coach Exchange](#)”, “[The Coaches Concierge](#)”, and “[Stratandops](#)” a major HR Consultancy located in Bangalore India, creating future client-centric products and services.

Jim is always available at [jim@thepeopleacademyinc.com](mailto:jim@thepeopleacademyinc.com) or by phone at 610-406-9227. And don't forget to check out the website at <http://www.thepeopleacademyinc.com>.