

OTAVALA CONSULTING

Helping People at the World of Work

White Paper

By Dr. Tomi Wahlström and Katrina Wahlström

Helping People at the World of Work

Otavala Consulting is a management consulting firm specializing in strategic management, HR, organizational development, and business psychology. Primarily, Otavala's target service industries include: professional services, human services, higher education, hospitality, and entertainment. However, Otavala Consulting can also provide the same services as well as operations management and quality management consulting to other business sectors. Essentially, Otavala Consulting provides any and all consulting services that deal with people management. Otavala Consulting helps people at the world of work!

Otavala Consulting is a blend of academic and commercial consulting firms. Like many average academic consulting firms, all of Otavala's services are custom designed for their client's needs. In spite of this, Otavala is able to deliver results with the speed and innovation of a commercial consulting firm. All consultants working with Otavala Consulting have earned graduate degrees in their field of expertise, and are led by doctorate degreed senior consultants. The consultants of Otavala have decades of cumulative consulting experience. Furthermore, they are continuously working to improve these skills through research endeavors and teaching.

Otavala Consulting provides a variety of different services including: workshops and training sessions, leadership coaching, conflict mediation, vocational counseling, traditional organizational development, and management consulting. All recommended implementations are based on detailed needs analyses and customized to fit the needs of the client organization. Otavala consultants believe that the employment of short-term strategy such as workshops and training should not be used to remedy symptoms of a company problem. There needs to be balance of both short-and-long term goals to promote continuous improvement. Continuous improvement is defined as a long-term business strategy to improve a company's customer value, quality, speed to market, flexibility, and reduced costs.

The current economic conditions have forced some businesses towards short-term strategies in order to survive. However, if future business growth and success are the goal, long-term business strategy cannot be abandoned (Keller, 2009). Therefore, Otavala consultants aim to align their client companies' strategies with the companies' individual configuration and culture. In addition, all projects must be evaluated for performance success to facilitate continuous improvement. Employees can be aligned to work with strategic intent and structured so that optimal organizational culture can be created to support high performance and profitability. When all these elements are aligned and synchronized, organizational effectiveness and efficiency can be achieved.

With the current economic downturn, it is increasingly important for companies to continuously learn and improve their operations and build effective strategies. Otavala Consulting helps to build learning organizations and self managing teams that are innovative and highly competitive. Otavala consultants help companies to optimize their processes and get the most out of their human capital. When organizations downsize, Otavala can help to restructure and re-motivate employees. When radical changes are needed, Otavala can help organizations to re-engineer their processes and manage the change process. When funds are limited, Otavala can help to develop employee incentives that are low cost and effective. These services help with retention and performance of employees, and make it possible for companies to attract top talent in the future.

Otavala consultants believe that people are the most important assets of a business. People are the source of quality and competitive advantage, and can be managed so that they bring success to any organization. Motivated and satisfied employees tend to be more productive and innovative. In a study involving a sample of 298 schools and 13,808 teachers, support was found for a significant relationship between employee satisfaction and job performance. Furthermore, strong relationships

were found between satisfaction, attitude, and turnover (Ostroff, 1992). Therefore, Otavala Consulting recommends that employees should be invested in and trained to perform at maximum levels.

In addition to the services referenced in the previous paragraphs, Otavala Consulting can help organizations to develop ethics programs and benefit from diversity. They can also help companies to evaluate the performance of their employees, select the right employees, and teach employees teamwork and conflict management. If needed, the consultants of Otavala can perform strategic audits, job analysis and evaluation, workflow analysis, value chain analysis, and develop employee satisfaction surveys.

Otavala Consulting is unique in many ways. Otavala is not a typical organizational development consultancy as they blend the strategic knowhow of a premier management consulting firm into their practices. Otavala is also not merely a training and development company, as they offer a lot more than training alone and approach all their services from systems point of view. Furthermore, they are a diverse and multicultural firm dedicated to social responsibility. Therefore, they frequently work with nonprofit organizations and help those who help others or provide cultural enrichment to the society. Otavala also provides training opportunities to doctorate students from several professional schools and universities. Otavala management believes in helping talented young professionals to get into the field of consulting and support entrepreneurship, and employ interns and practicum students as trainees. They work closely with academia and collaborate with a wide network of other consultants. In that way, Otavala can access expertise in nearly any area of business administration. Otavala can find help for our clients in finance, accounting, IT, or marketing.

The name Otavala symbolizes what Otavala Consulting does as a firm. Otavala is derived from the root word Otava. Otava is a Finnish word meaning “the big dipper.” In the Finnish language, the letters -la at the end of the word designate a place. Thus, Otavala means “the place of the big dipper.”

As is widely known, big dipper is used to find the northern star that is commonly used for navigation and direction. Therefore, Otavala is a place of advice and direction. That is exactly what Otavala consultants do. They give advice and help companies to find their “true north” with good strategic and people management.

Otavala Consulting follows 7 guiding principles (seven stars in the big dipper). Most importantly, Otavala consultants are value based in all of their actions. This means that they follow the values of respect, collaboration, authenticity, self-awareness, and empowerment. They treat the clients with respect and collaborate with them to achieve success for them. They are authentic and work with integrity while being self-aware and empowering their clients for better performance and leadership. All services Otavala provides are supported by theory and informed by data. Otavala consultants have acquired strong theoretical foundation in the fields of management and business psychology, and base their recommendations on solid theoretical models. While doing this, they maintain open systems orientation and focus on inter-relationships between different parts of the system (each organization is a system and part of a bigger system). In addition, Otavala consultants make recommendations that are based on facts and academically researched data. They do not make assumptions without validation, or recommendations without reliable support. Otavala consultants also believe in action research and thrive for continuous improvement and learning. They believe in continuously and lifelong learning from their own actions and practices, and actively evaluating their own performance to ensure that they exceed their clients’ expectations. Furthermore, Otavala consultants are process focused and aim for creation of positive change through process improvement. They are also client centered and seek to provide what their clients want and need and not merely what they think that should be done. Finally, they maintain constant focus on effectiveness and health supporting sustainable development and social responsibility.

The founder of Otavala Consulting, Dr. Tomi Wahlstrom, is an expert in leadership and strategic management. He has a decade of clinical experience as a psychotherapist, followed by more than a decade of academic experience as a professor and administrator. Through these two decades, he has continuously worked as a management consultant and has previously owned Apollo Consulting Inc. and Omni Management Group, LLC. He has earned a doctorate degree in management after graduating with a master's degree in human resource management and a bachelor's degree in psychology. He has also earned professional certificates in depth psychology and quality management. In addition, he has studied in two different doctorate programs of clinical psychology. He has worked in Europe and Asia, and is very understanding of the cultural differences between different countries and ethnic groups.

Katrina Wahlstrom, co-founder of Otavala consulting, manages the business operations of the consulting firm. She has over 6 years experience as a business professional and has a degree in Business Administration. Her work experiences in an independent HR consulting firm in Los Angeles and a large IT staffing company in Chicago have prepared her to manage the daily operations including financial oversight and staffing. She is currently working towards her MBA at North Park University after studying at the business psychology doctorate program in the Chicago School of Professional Psychology for a year.

The Staff consultants of Otavala bring a variety of strong talents to the team. Derek Rees has earned a Master's degree in industrial and organizational psychology and worked with many clients as a consultant, and he is Otavala's teambuilding expert. He frequently speaks in several professional organizations' meetings and serves in the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce committees. Steve Rivera has a master's degree in industrial and organizational psychology as well as another master's degree in counseling. He is a conflict mediation expert and excels in vocational and career counseling. He is fluent

in Spanish and frequently speaks in the Latin American Chamber of Commerce events. Both Derek and Steve are completing their doctorate degrees in business psychology.

In addition to these staff consultants, Otavala employs several associate consultants who are new to the consulting field but possess outstanding skills and abilities, and have earned graduate degrees. Among them is Ryan Simmons, who conducts first time/first line management workshops for those who are new in supervisory positions. He has a master's degree in industrial and organizational psychology and is earning a doctorate degree in leadership. Another great talent, Shannon Pellet provides employee selection and performance management training, and has earned a master's degree in industrial and organizational psychology. In addition, Anjali Seefeldt works as the Consulting Coordinator and brings a multitude of skills and abilities with her. She is a top notch graduate student entering into the field of consulting. Also, Otavala works with numerous network consultants coast to coast. These experienced colleagues include doctorate level professionals and academics in marketing, organizational psychology, education, etc. Among them are veterans in consulting with over 30 years of field experience as well as well known scholars. Some of these talented professionals work as Senior Consultants with Otavala, such as Tia Rakos who has years of consulting experience in Europe and Dr. Adam Gerber who earned his doctorate degree in Paris, France.

In conclusion, Otavala Consulting is an innovative and highly energetic consulting firm helping people at the world of work. With their unique blend of academic and commercial consulting, and a talented team of consultants, they offer a variety of organizational development and management consulting services to small to middle-sized businesses. They are available in Chicago and for travel across the United States, or even internationally. With contacts and work experiences in Los Angeles and New York, they primarily work in the three biggest cities in the US.

References

Ostroff, C. (1992). The Relationship between Satisfaction, Attitudes, and Performance: An Organizational Level Analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 77(6), 963-974.

Keller, R. (2009). Taking the Long-Term Perspective Will Pay Off. *Industry Week*, 258(2), 14.

Robbins, S. P., Judge, T. A., (2007). *Organizational Behavior*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey. Pearson Prentice Hall.