

An Intervention Theory

The following is largely based on the work of Chris Argyris in *Intervention Theory and Method*. It can be seen as the underlying “process outcomes” the consultant is seeking in an intervention, i.e., valid and useful information, free choice, and internal commitment.

The base of the model is at the bottom of the chart.

<p>Internal Commitment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The target is for as many people as possible to have a high level of commitment to the option that was chosen. • A high ownership and feeling of responsibility. That people are acting under the influence of internal decision rather than external forces. • More likely to hold over time and under stress • Open to re-examination (our commitment to “valid and useful information” may bring new information and new choices)
<p>Free Choice</p>	<p>The task is for the client to select the option with the highest probability of succeeding (within cost limits). The process needs to enable that choice to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on an exploration of options • Voluntary, not from habit or coercion • Proactive, not reactive
<p>Valid & Useful Information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information that can be publicly verified; that can be tested with a broad range of people; that can be openly gathered and discussed. • Is useful in the sense that something can be done with it to effect change

The theory assumes that one element builds on the other. The more the information is valid and useful, the more likely the free choice, the more there is truly free choice, the more likely there will be internal commitment.

The theory also assumes that the consultant is not just trying to help the client solve a particular problem or engage a specific opportunity; but is also concerned with two other matters:

- that people end up with high internal commitment to the direction, and
- that the organizational culture is enabled to increasingly value and have the ability to generate valid and useful information, encourage free choice, and seek internal commitment.

There is a tension in an intervention between addressing the opportunity or problem at hand and pursuing the values in this intervention theory. Organizational leaders may decide to give more attention to one need over the other because of time limits, financial costs or due to holding different values.