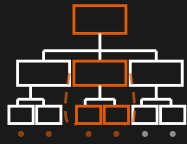


Organisational Design



Organisational Design is the deliberate shaping of an organisation's structure, roles, reporting relationships, decision rights, and ways of working to enable it to deliver its purpose effectively. It is distinct from Organisational Development but closely complementary: OD asks how we help people and culture thrive; Org Design asks whether the structure itself enables or obstructs that. Good Org Design is not a one-time exercise — it is an ongoing discipline that responds to strategic change, growth, and the evolving needs of the people who work within it.

WHAT ACTIVITY LOOKS LIKE

- Operating model design: defining how an organisation creates and delivers value, including its functions, processes, and governance.
- Structural reviews: assessing current structures against strategic requirements and designing alternatives.
- Role and job architecture: defining roles, responsibilities, decision rights, and grading frameworks.
- Spans and layers analysis: optimising management ratios and organisational layers for effectiveness and efficiency.
- Team and unit design: configuring teams around work, not legacy structures or individual preferences.
- Interface and boundary design: clarifying how functions, teams, and roles interact and where accountabilities sit.
- Workflow and process mapping: designing how work flows through the organisation to reduce duplication and friction.

DEVELOPING ORG DESIGN PRACTICE: KEY FRAMEWORKS

- **Galbraith Star Model:** the foundational framework linking strategy, structure, processes, rewards, and people as five interdependent design elements.
- **Kates and Galbraith (Designing Your Organisation):** the practitioner standard for applied Org Design, grounded in the Star Model.
- **McKinsey 7S Framework:** a systems-level model connecting hard and soft organisational elements to assess alignment and design coherence.
- **Nadler-Tushman Congruence Model:** a diagnostic framework for assessing how well strategy, work, people, and structure align.
- **Team Topologies (Skelton and Pais):** a modern framework for designing team structures and interaction modes, particularly relevant for technology and product organisations.



ORGANISATIONAL DESIGN ACROSS SECTORS

PUBLIC SECTOR

Local authorities use Org Design to navigate service redesign under resource constraint. NHS organisations apply it through Integrated Care System and ICB structural development, shared service configuration, and clinical service reconfiguration programmes.

THIRD SECTOR

Charities and social enterprises use Org Design to balance flat, values-driven structures with the governance requirements of growth, funding compliance, and multi-site or federated models.

Working in OD or Org Design? Explore the OD Practitioner Self-Assessment and other tools at avantpeople.co.uk/resources



MODERN AND INCLUSIVE DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Effective EDI practice is skills-led, not just knowledge-led. The distinction matters: knowing the Equality Act is not enough. What makes the difference is what a practitioner can do with that knowledge, and with people:

- Human-centred design: structures designed around the experience and needs of the people who work within them, not organisational convenience.
- Cognitive load: roles and structures that minimise unnecessary complexity, ambiguity, and decision-making burden so people can focus on the work that matters.
- Inclusive design from the outset: accessibility, flexibility, and equity built into structures and role design rather than retrofitted afterwards.
- Agile and adaptive structures: designing for responsiveness and iteration rather than rigid hierarchy, with clear mechanisms for reconfiguration as context changes.
- Distributed decision-making: pushing decisions to where the knowledge and accountability sit, rather than centralising by default.
- Network thinking: recognising informal networks and relationships as structural assets, not noise to be managed out.
- Psychological safety as a design consideration: team size, role clarity, and reporting relationships all affect whether people feel safe to contribute.

SKILLS NEEDED TO DELIVER IT EFFECTIVELY

- Systems and structural thinking: seeing how form, function, and strategy interact
- Stakeholder facilitation: engaging leaders and teams in design processes that feel fair and are well-informed
- Workforce and data analytics: using data to assess structural effectiveness and model options
- Business architecture: understanding operating models, value chains, and process flows
- Change management: designing for transition as well as destination
- Consulting and contracting: managing complex, politically charged redesign work with integrity

QUALIFICATIONS AND FURTHER RESOURCES

- [CIPD Level 7 Advanced Diploma](#): covers Org Design as part of OD and People Strategy specialisms.
- [Henley Business School](#): MSc in Organisational Change with Org Design content.
- [Roffey Park Institute](#): OD and Org Design practitioner programmes and research.
- [AIHR Org Design Certificate](#): practitioner-focused online programme covering operating models, structure, and design process.
- [Org Design Forum](#): global practitioner community, events, and resources.
- [The Ready](#): modern Org Design consultancy with free resources including the OS Canvas for designing adaptive organisations.
- [McKinsey Organisation Practice](#): extensive free research on structure, operating models, and organisational effectiveness.
- [Josh Bersin Academy](#): practitioner research on team design and organisational effectiveness.
- [CIPD](#): Profession Map, Org Design guidance, and research publications.
- [Avant People](#): OD and Org Design practitioner tools and resources.