

This piece by Eva Deligiannis, an organisational consultant and coach, illustrates a consulting application of ROG to an Australian judicial system. The key theory maps are the 'wave model' and 'ethical presence'.

Eva Deligiannis: The Wave model and the Victorian Judicial System

As I sit here in front of my computer it is late December in Melbourne Australia. Christmas has come and gone and now I am trying to reclaim a semblance of order in my office again. I shuffle papers and cross off tasks from my list of things to do. During this busyness, I realise how much has happened over the last two years, particularly in 2020. No wonder I feel exhausted.

In 2019 I travelled to London to complete the certificate in Relational Organisational Gestalt (ROG). During my training, I connected with colleagues in my field of organisational work and what impacted me the most is the feeling of not being alone anymore. I found a Gestalt community for my organisational work. A community where I gained support for my struggles and where I could share my hope for a new way of approaching work in organisations. We all had a common belief that what is happening in organisations is no longer sustainable and that more humane ways of working in organisations was urgently needed.

A crucial concept in the ROG training for me is 'ethical presence'. I learnt that focusing and honing my presence and awareness of how I impact others is a key skill for a ROG practitioner in organisations. Ethical presence requires my focused intention to open a space and my availability for others to bring more of themselves into our dialogue. The small illustration that follows, has Gestalt fundamentals of phenomenology, dialogue and field theory (encased in the SOS model) directly into ways we can bring relationality to organisational life for teams, groups, and systems.

After I completed my training with Sally Denham-Vaughan and Marie-Anne Chidiac, I came back with renewed vigour to do things differently in my consulting work. My new awareness helped me connect with others more openly and directly about my implicit experience bringing more depth and richness to my consulting work.



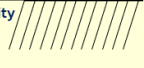
The Wave model was immediately applicable and valuable in my change management work for a client of mine in Melbourne's judiciary system. It gave me a way to see organisational life through a multi-dimensional lens, viewing what is publicly acknowledged and the implicit culture and beliefs of organisational life as a tapestry of human interactions. I used the Wave model as a diagnostic tool to craft a stakeholder engagement strategy that allowed me to encode the ROG model and approach into my consulting work, I'll share an essence of this with you now.

In 2019 I was engaged to develop a stakeholder engagement plan for the Victorian judicial system who were undertaking a large technology change. I was part of the small change management team and on our arrival, we were swept up into a series of formal meetings as part of our induction to meet relevant stakeholders in positions of authority and schooled in the right way to address judicial officers. It felt very much like we are on show and being examined to get their approval.

Much of my early work was spent meeting various stakeholders who were all at different levels in the organisation and at various locations. It took time to find the right person to connect with and get approval to access other locations or people. A lot of what I thought would be easy to access such as telephone lists, job titles and locations was harder to find; ultimately what I uncovered was that much of what I needed was kept private. The more I learnt about who to talk to, where to find information, understood their rituals and language to use, the closer I felt to the client system. This knowledge and felt sense gave me a way to moderate or organise myself so that I was not too different or even offensive to those I needed to work with. The way the judicial system presented and organised its information and business made it very easy for newcomers to make mistakes and offend those we needed to build trust and collaborate with.

The Courts have previously had failed attempts with similar implementation to its disparate and dilapidated systems. These had left them with deeply held doubts and a lack of trust for any project team. All this rich experience helped me overlay the Wave model to target strategies at each level of the courts culture & system; for the ego function, id and personality function. One of the key strategies recommended in the stakeholder engagement plan was for the change team to promote and build capability with trusted internal (local) leaders who were publicly revered (ego function) within the juridical system to lead the change and build trust with their colleagues and other staff.

A Wave Metaphor - Example

<p>Wave as Ego Above the surface, visible, what we say we do</p> 	<p>Sea depth as Id Less visible, unacknowledged dynamics, connected to local currents and flows</p> 	<p>Seabed as Personality Sedimented but changing slowly with time. The culture and narrative</p> 	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Analysis</th> <th>Interventions</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can do attitude • Loyal to justice mission • Change urgency • Government backed • Do small changes often </td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build connection visibly with trusted leaders • "heroes" • Reinforce existing competency </td> </tr> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formality / protocols • Connection diffuse /split • Systems slow, some outdated • Fear of mistakes • Wellbeing – stress & social isolation (role clarity low) </td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build trust & stay close • Enable Local leaders with skills and tools so they "show the way" • Coaching Change mgt skills • Consulting team stay in background </td> </tr> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current System "old faithful" • Previous failed attempts & skepticism about this attempt (unfinished business) • Punitive, tuff to last </td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build Belief = Create a spaces for stakeholders to work together build, test, practise new solution • Time tension Vs project outcomes </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Analysis	Interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can do attitude • Loyal to justice mission • Change urgency • Government backed • Do small changes often 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build connection visibly with trusted leaders • "heroes" • Reinforce existing competency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formality / protocols • Connection diffuse /split • Systems slow, some outdated • Fear of mistakes • Wellbeing – stress & social isolation (role clarity low) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build trust & stay close • Enable Local leaders with skills and tools so they "show the way" • Coaching Change mgt skills • Consulting team stay in background 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current System "old faithful" • Previous failed attempts & skepticism about this attempt (unfinished business) • Punitive, tuff to last 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build Belief = Create a spaces for stakeholders to work together build, test, practise new solution • Time tension Vs project outcomes
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Using the Wave model helped me see the organisational life as different functions and parts of the ocean which are all connected, each impacting the other's capacity to adapt, thrive and survive.

Since then, I helped establish a Special Interest Group for those interested in Gestalt in Organisations with the support of the Gestalt Centre in Melbourne. The interest and energy led to us to run a ROG Introduction training program with Sally Denham-Vaughan's help in Melbourne in 2020. This training reached almost 50 people across Australia and New Zealand which far exceeded our plans. I am definitely feeling more connected and not alone. Who knew that all this was possible in two years!

Eva Deligiannis



Eva, M.Gestalt Therapy, M.Org Dynamics, B.Bus, MPACFA, MGANZ works as an Organisational Consultant, Coach/ Supervisor for Change leaders and works with a diverse range of organisations across Australia. She has a background in change management with over 25 years of experience working with enterprise-wide solutions that transform culture and technology in Australia. Eva has completed Relational Organizational Gestalt (ROG) training in 2019 with Relational Change and has integrated the ROG practices into her consulting practice. Eva also works as a psychotherapist in private practice in Melbourne. You can contact Eva at eva@changemaking.com.au

