

John Baker

Founding Partner – shift consulting

In late 1983 John Baker launched a small consulting firm initially called Productive Communications. Twenty years later, his firm has established a reputation for its innovative and highly integrative approach to developing people, teams and organizations.

John has a proven history of helping to align individual efforts with organizational systems to increase both personal fulfillment and organizational performance. Employing a communications-based methodology, he illuminates the untapped power of conversation to reveal connection, inspire possibilities, coordinate action, honour and fulfill promises to generate meaningful accomplishment.

He has helped his clients confront the changing social, economic and environmental realities facing us all. Behind the headlines, John has been guiding developmental conversations in which people are thinking together to address questions that matter, revealing insights and generating compelling, practical responses that fulfill the integrity of the whole. You can count on him to:

- Reveal the leverage for accelerating performance improvement
- Create co-ordinated action in and across teams and multi-stakeholder groups
- Develop the capacity of the team and organization to creatively fulfill its core purpose and unique value contribution

With his operational focus, John can help you translate strategy into practice, ideas into reality and intention into performance.

In our times work is often seen only as a source of livelihood or, at worst, a necessary evil sandwiched between weekends. Possibilities for work as a source of fulfillment are quietly dismissed. John has an ability for helping others shift to an orientation in which work can be embraced as a developmental medium – capable of unleashing the full potential of all – while serving as a source of connection, accomplishment, contribution and fulfillment.

John embraces a vision of work in which people, teams and organizations are freely and enthusiastically taking responsibility for the whole of which they are uniquely an autonomous part. This operating philosophy, called *Responsible Freedom*, shapes his approach to developing people, teams and organizations.

Related Experience

Strategic Planning & Multi-Stakeholder Project Design and Facilitation

Examples of assisting multi-stakeholder groups to address complex issues that cross organizational and jurisdictional boundaries include:

- Assisted several private and public sector Boards in developing recruiting and selection criteria for a new CEO for each client organization. Interviewed key stakeholders to determine different priorities and synthesized into selection criteria for the Board.
- Worked with forest company representatives, local environment groups and government ministries to replace clear-cutting with ecologically and economically sustainable harvesting alternatives.
- Assisted the Vancouver Aquarium in the difficult decision to abandon the established practice of exhibiting killer whales while sustaining its financial success.
- Helped the City of Vancouver in working with the public to explore and choose from a number of different rapid transit options.
- With the introduction of citizen-initiated planning to several neighbourhoods, worked alongside city planning staff as they shifted from “planning for” to “planning with” different neighbourhood groups.
- In several large public and private sector organizations, engaged senior union and management representatives in collaborative approaches to accomplish unprecedented reductions in the number of accidents and incidents in the workplace.
- Facilitated a series of Board and senior executive retreats with the amalgamation of the B.C. Children’s Hospital, the Women’s Health Care Centre of B.C. and the Sunny Hill Health Care Centre for Children with Disabilities to develop a shared purpose supported by an integrated organizational strategy.
- For a multi-national forest products firm, provided on-going facilitation services for service delivery teams, internal client groups, and various project teams. Examples include multi-stakeholder purchasing decisions like SAP, earthquake response teams, service integration teams, best practices research and major construction projects.
- Working with a cross-functional team of engineers, foresters and loggers designed a high performing work system that integrated what had previously been highly discrete activities separated along functional silos.
- In the last five years, have facilitated the strategic planning and board development of several arts organizations including, The Whistler Arts Council, The Firehall Arts Centre, Performance Arts Lodge/Vancouver, Presentation House, Centennial Theatre, Carousel Theatre and Moving Pictures: Canadian Films on Tour.

Training & Development Workshops and Other Capacity Building Initiatives

In times of change it is not uncommon for groups and organizations to face growing gaps between their current performance capacity and what the current business conditions require. Outlined below are some examples in which John has helped to develop the capacity of the team and organization to creatively fulfill its core purpose and unique value contribution.

- Assisting a government appointed board of directors in leading the transition from a highly centralized system for the delivery of a range of services to families and children, to a regional delivery system designed to empower communities over time.
- Designed and facilitated a pilot project between Environment Canada and various municipalities of the Okanagan Valley to encourage, facilitate and promote an ecosystem approach and context to local planning and decision-making in the Okanagan Basin.
- When the Forest Practices Code was introduced faster than the infrastructure necessary to support it, launched and guided several projects to design and deliver workshops to subject matter experts throughout the province to assist them in expediting knowledge transfer on the Forest Practices Code to industry and private contractors.
- Facilitated many sessions within the City of Vancouver to review, re-create and re-design internal departments to simplify, remove redundancies and eliminate systemic “turf wars” and organizational barriers to performance.
- With an expanding client base, BC Assessment had developed a strategy to reduce costs while improving service delivery. Over a four-year period, developed the accountability and operational performance capacity of employees, leaders, teams and local business units.
- The CEO of a medium-sized international software developer was concerned with the capability of the organization to deliver on its strategy and increasing investor confidence. Designed and implemented a high performing organization capable of delivering on the strategy of the founding partners.
- Since the mid-80s, John has been the preferred consultant in guiding the organizational development of this large international forest resources company. Serving as coach, facilitator, trainer and performance architect, John has worked with senior executives, business units, intact and multi-stakeholder teams and employees at all levels of the organization to resolve complex issues and improve operational and safety performance.

Performance Consultant, Finning Training Services 1979 – 1983

Prior to starting his own firm, John was employed with Finning Training Services which was the consulting arm of Finning Tractor & Equipment, the largest heavy equipment dealer in the world. As one of several professional staff, John helped

to transform this internal department into a successful profit centre, offering performance management, training and development services to a wide range of private and public sector clients across Canada. In its time, Finning Training Services was one of the largest and most reputable performance improvement services in Western Canada.

Junior Consultant, Controlled Interval Scheduling 1977 – 1979

Analysed, designed and implemented performance management systems for clients in Canada and the U.S. Increased organizational performance, with measureable payback, through establishing clear standards and performance management systems. Supported implementation with on-going coaching of supervisor and management staff.

Program Manager, Employment & Immigration Canada 1973 – 1977

Various projects and assignments related to developing the labour force of the Yukon Territory and Northern B.C.

Education & Development

United States Navy, 1967 – 70, Honourably discharged
B.A. (Political Science), Simon Fraser University, 1973
Leadership & Mastery, Innovation Associates, Boston, 1988
The Empowered Manager, Peter Block, New Jersey, 1989
Organizational Learning In Action, Chris Argyris, Boston, 1993
Flying Starship Work Design Simulation, Peter Block, New Jersey, 1992
Introduction to *iThink*® and Systems Thinking, 1995
Fundamentals of Human Development, Contegrity, Michigan, Ongoing

Volunteer and Related Activities

Douglas College Student Council – First Student President, 1970 - 72
IWA Plant Committee Chairman, 1973
Green Thumb Theatre for Young People, Board Member, 1972 - 1978
Training & Development Society of BC, President, 1984 – 86
Leadership Vancouver, Retreat Facilitator, 1991 – 1996
World Business Academy – Charter Member, Vancouver Chapter 1995 - 98
Shameless Hussy Productions, Board of Directors, 1998 – 2001
BC Organizational Development Network, Executive Member, 2004 - 2006