



Systems Thinking: A Language for Team Learning and Leadership

Brief Description

The purpose of this two-day intensive program is to develop Systems Thinking skills for practical everyday use. Participants will gain an increased capacity to assist work teams that need to understand complex problems together.

Peter Senge has brought the subject of Systems Thinking into popular awareness. The objective of Systems Thinking is to increase our understanding of how the world works why things usually go the way they do. Through the use of specific tools and methods participants will gain a better understanding of the circular vs. linear view of cause and effect chains. Where possible public sector work examples will be used to illustrate the archetypes. As a discipline Systems Thinking is approachable by all, can be taught, and requires practice to achieve a level of competence.

The Core Competencies courses of the USDA Graduate School (and the Society for Organizational Learning) provide a basic introduction to Systems Thinking. This course carries the subject to a deeper level of mastery.

Pre-Requisite:

Either the 3-day USDA Graduate School program “Organizational Learning Core Competency Course for Learning Leaders” or the Society for Organizational Learning “Core Competencies Course.” Both include the “Beer Game” and Systems Thinking work including the system archetypes. Other pre-requisite programs might include the team learning lab program or specifically designed learning lab programs conducted for your agency, which included an introduction to systems thinking and the five disciplines.

Program Objectives

Participants in this two-day Systems Thinking program will have:

- Increased skills for understanding the causes and dynamics of performance and phenomena (good and bad). These skills can be applied to issues within the organization, in the program/mission of the organization, in the larger community, and personally.

- Skill in the vocabulary and diagramming for communicating about systems: causal diagramming, use of the system archetypes in practical settings, ability to use the Systems Thinking process in addressing complex work issues.
- Progress on current work issues through class exercises and group projects.
- Increased capacity to assist work teams that need to understand complex problems

Program Content

The program includes:

- A brief review of the Systems Thinking experience from the Core Course, including the beer game and work with archetypes. A brief review of the disciplines of organizational learning which are essential complements for Systems Thinking.
- A case example to illustrate the Systems Thinking method.
- A review of the essential tool “Events – Patterns – Structure” hierarchy.
- A review of the basic paradigm “Change causes change.” An understanding of why we trace chains of cause and effect.
- “Thought Bubbles” — adding to our systems diagrams to illustrate the mental models that make the system operate the way it does.
- Exercises on “resource arithmetic to build a greater understanding of how resources are amassed and diminished gradually.”
- A review of the System Archetypes: fixes that backfire, shifting the burden, limits to success and other archetypes. Practice examples will focus on current issues. Participants will learn how to assess which archetypes might fit their case.
- An introduction of the Going Deeper — Questions will help you move from *understanding* towards *action* in our complex world.
- A review of Systems Thinking Steps — a process for examining situations from a systemic perspective..
- Case examples will be fully worked, to illustrate good practice in real settings.
- A practice session where groups will work on their problems using the full range of Systems Thinking tools, focusing on making progress on a real issue of current importance in a 2–6 hour exercise.

RICHARD KARASH

Richard Karash is an independent consultant in Boston, Massachusetts. His work covers the broad range of Learning Organization disciplines, with special emphasis on Systems Thinking. He consults and facilitates, develops and conducts training programs, and delivers speeches and corporate events for a wide range of organizations. Mr. Karash's focus is in developing capacity for learning and change in client organizations. He creates custom training programs, conducts train-the-trainer and instructor certification, and provides coaching.

Mr. Karash is a contributor to *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organization*. He has been a regular presenter at the annual Systems Thinking in Action conference and a contributor to *The Systems Thinker*. He is the creator and moderator of "Learning-Org," a worldwide public dialog on the Internet about learning organizations, and is an elected Trustee of the Society for Organizational Learning.

Mr. Karash was a senior staff member at Innovation Associates, Inc. (now an Arthur D. Little company) from 1991 through 1995, and continues as an adjunct member of the staff. In 1998, Mr. Karash received Arthur D. Little "Star Case" awards twice for outstanding customer satisfaction. Prior to joining IA, Mr. Karash spent nearly twenty years as an executive in technology-based companies. In 1970, he co-founded a highly successful computer software firm, Management Decision Systems, Inc., which pioneered decision support applications in consumer goods marketing. His professional experience there includes information technology, market research, new product development, and computer simulation modeling. From 1983 through 1986, he was chief operating officer of a company developing artificial intelligence applications software for the financial services industry and later was VP - Marketing as part of the turn-around team at Symbolic, Inc., a computer workstation vendor. Immediately prior to joining Innovation Associates, he spent several years as an independent consultant working on business strategy and strategic planning for software and other high-tech firms.

Mr. Karash holds Bachelor of Science degrees in Physics and Management from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and a Master of Science from MIT's Sloan School of Management, with concentrations in Marketing and Operations Research.

Course Costs and Accommodations:

Tuition Costs: **\$800.00**

Dates: **Program will begin at 8:30 on November 13, 2002 and end at 4:30 November 14, 2002**

Location : 1201 Constitution Avenue N.W. Room 1203, Washington,D.C

Registration

All registration materials should be typed or printed and faxed to Phyllis Bacon at the Graduate School, USDA (fax 202 314-3577) on or before **June 21, 2002**. **On line registration is also available by going to the Graduate School web site**
www.grad.usda.gov

The Registration Materials should include the registration information requested below and your payment documentation. If you are submitting an approved government training form SF-182, 1556 or 350 please assure that all of the necessary accounting information and signatures are in place. If you are paying by credit card, check or money order please complete the attached credit card information form and sign.

Your registration will be confirmed when we have received an online or faxed copy of the registration information below with a signed faxed copy of the training form or credit card form.

If you have any questions regarding your registration please contact Phyllis Bacon at Phyllis_Bacon @grad.usda.gov.

Questions regarding the program and the course content can be addressed to Georgie Bishop at <mailto:Georgie3@attbi.com>

Cancellations and Substitutions

Students may withdraw up to two weeks before the course without penalty. Substitutions are welcome up to 3 days before the course begins.

See registration form below:



SYSTEMS THINKING: A LANGUAGE FOR TEAM LEARNING AND LEADERSHIP

REGISTRATION FORM **PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT**

Name:

Organization Name:
Please avoid acronyms

Business Address:
City, State and Zip

Business Phone:

Business Fax;

E-Mail:

Home Phone: