WHITE PAPER

On Systems Thinking

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One of the greatest impediments to improving the world we live in is the failure of organizations to encourage their leaders and managers to engage in "Systems Thinking." Typically management is racing at top speed trying to keep up, reactively "fight fires," push on the edges (while missing the leverage points), and meet the urgent (but often not critical) needs of customers, team members, and others experiencing breakdowns. Leaders and managers need to perceive a system from *at least* three dimensions: its human/sociology functioning, its economic/efficiency, and its technical/science aspects.

The following questions enable a leader to understand the "system's architecture" – its design, and then find ways to use "pressure points" and "leverage" to shift the system.

First, Define the System – Key Issues & Questions

- the Purpose/Strategy/Objectives
- the Whole looks like: including Inputs, Outputs, "sources of energy" that "fuels the system:
- the Environment in which the system exists
- the Parts/Components (tangible elements) that compose the system
- the Dependencies, Variables, Interfaces & Interdependencies (often intangible elements)
- the Connectivities & Feedback Loops,
- the Core Functions and inter-relationships between Functions
- the Metrics used to measure performance including Standards of Excellence & Sensitivities
- the Rewards System that links to the Performance Metrics
- the Economics & Reliabilities (measured by time, efficiency, total life cycle costs, etc)
- the Human & Social Factors, including Culture, Values, Leadership, Users, Employees, Communities
- the Technology/Physics/Biology/Electronics/Chemistry, etc. *and* it's impact on Socio-Economics
- the Paradigms underpinning understanding of the system (& may block upgrading the system) (IOW, how would 10 different, diverse thinkers with diverse backgrounds perceive the system)
- the Innovation & Regenerativities needed to upgrade/refine/improve the system
- the Ease & Difficulties in Upgrading or Replacing the System
- the Efficiencies & Adaptabilities
- the Structures, Statics & Dynamics, Key Factors for Success
- the Laws, Principles, and Spirit that Govern the system
- the Conflicts, Tensions, & Oppositions in the System
- the Synergies (desired & real), and Synergy Blockages
- the Vulnerabilities, Weaknesses, Breakdown Factors/Points, Hostilities
- the Reliability, Maintenance & Reparability
- the Competitiveness of the System with other Solutions (present & future)
  and lastly ……
- the Most Challenging/Uncomfortable Questions we must always be asking that everyone's avoiding

For more ideas, please see:

- **Organizational Transformation** — by Robert Porter Lynch

- **If You Want to Change Things** — Robert Porter Lynch — a retrospective

- **Overcoming Resistance to Change** — Robert Porter Lynch — be sure to read this before, during, and after you try to change any organization

- **Law of Compounding Risks** Understanding how to handle complex interfaces

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About Us

The Institute works with senior executives in organizations that are committed to achieving extraordinary results through breakthroughs generated from a foundation of collaborative excellence.

We are dedicated to the adoption of the strategies, skills and philosophies of collaborative architectures enabling teams to think, create and work together, producing results far beyond what would otherwise be possible. Our collaborative excellence architecture underpins thousands of the world's most successful alliances across the globe. We provide each of our clients a unique set of:

Best Practice *Architectures*, and Collaborative *Strategies*,

Integrated High Performance *Systems*, Flexible and Adaptable *Structures*, and

Timely Win-Win *Solutions*

Our Transformative Action-Learning Engagement workshop framework:

- Creates strategic & operational alignment,
- Is action oriented,
- Uses best practices to ensure long term success,
- Ensures high performance,
- Minimizes future breakdowns, and
- Creates pathway & guidance for legal contracts

We concentrate on the Key Factors for Success, which seasoned managers affirm as the essential ingredients to effective alliance and collaborative innovation implementation:

- Properly trained innovation champions, and project managers,
- Powerful strategic imperative to guide the effort,
- Clear operational performance processes with breakthrough measurements,
- Effective innovation management process designed for the alliance, and
- Proper leadership support

Unlike consultants, we are "Architects and Capability Builders" who deliver a tested and effective *strategic system* and *process methodology* that harnesses the innovative power of differentials in thinking across internal and external boundaries.