

Applied Systems Thinking for Organization Success

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Abstract. Systems Engineers are taught to establish formal structures and processes as they manage development activities in an environment framed by detailed schedules and specifications. This tactical orientation can optimize the outcomes of an individual project, but often ignores the long-term impact on the strategic goals of the parent enterprise system. “Systems thinking” considers the systems in which a project operates and can shift the focus from managing “tasks” using systems engineering to managing the strategic direction of the organization. Addressing projects from a systems perspective while factoring in the role of enabling systems is fundamental to the success of the overall enterprise system, especially in a resource-constrained environment. Traditional systems engineering training often focuses on methods and tools to execute project tasks; this tutorial helps participants adopt a holistic, systems approach as a logical foundation for decision-making that benefits the overall enterprise. The tutorial materials provide participants a unique perspective on how to apply systems thinking, systems engineering methods, and quality management principles to the challenge of developing and managing organizational strategy. Participants will explore systems thinking concepts that help them understand how systems interact within the extended enterprise; they will grapple with the practical problems of analyzing organization performance; and they will learn how to select strategic initiatives to maximize organizational benefit. The tutorial is highly interactive, leveraging the participants’ own experiences as well as a prepared case study designed to reinforce concepts and give students practical experience in applying systems thinking techniques to organization systems.

Biography

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