

Complexity Leadership in a Changing World

A Systems Thinking Approach

Leader's Workshop with
Professor Kambiz Maani
First Author of Internationally Acclaimed Book:
"Systems Thinking, System Dynamics-
Managing Change and Complexity"



- Why do leaders and organizations need Systems Thinking?
- Why do we need new tools to understand and manage complexity?
- What are the implications for...
 - Assessing where the organization is?
 - Breaking down silo mentality?
 - Integration across sectors & organizations?
 - Harmonising organizational culture?
 - Scenario thinking & planning?
- How to create constructive dialogues and build learning teams & organizations?
- How to implement systems thinking in your organization?
- How to integrate strategic planning with systems thinking?

Systems Thinking is a new paradigm and scientific methodology for dealing with complex situations underlying business, economic, social and natural systems. Systems Thinking views the organization as a *whole* and focuses on interdependencies and relationships between various elements of the system: departments, divisions, sectors, etc and how they impact each other and the entire system.

This workshop will introduce concepts and tools of Systems Thinking & leadership and relate them to endemic strategic issues and challenges facing organizations today. Systems Thinking enables leaders and organizations to:

- ❑ Work collaboratively across sectoral and organizational boundaries
- ❑ Effectively deal with uncertainty and complexity
- ❑ Foresee the unintended consequences of actions, policies and strategies
- ❑ Identify root causes and fundamental solutions to chronic problems
- ❑ Avoid misjudging problem symptoms for their causes
- ❑ Reconcile dilemma of short-term fixes vs long terms interventions
- ❑ Resolve endemic staff morale and productivity problems
- ❑ Bring alignment of vision and action to teams and groups
- ❑ Apply systemic leverage for sustainable interventions
- ❑ Become a living and learning organization

The workshop covers real case examples in government policy, financial markets, healthcare, energy, biosecurity, sustainability, farming & agriculture and many more.

Course Overview

What is Systems Thinking?

Our prevailing worldview and the way contemporary organizations are structured and function are deeply rooted in the thinking that originated in the 17th century! This linear, fragmented and reductionist mindset has been a major barrier to breakthrough innovation and true progress in our technology-driven society.

- Why do we think the way we do? The origins of modern thinking
- What is a system and what is not? Systems and non-systems
- Why do leaders and managers need Systems Thinking?
- How do we make sense of the world? Four Levels of Thinking
- Why do organizations fail? Two major studies, one common conclusion

Unravelling Complexity

Today, leaders and decision makers operate in an environment of ever-increasing complexity. Yet, most of us are not equipped to deal with complexity. Hence, we get frustrated by uncertainty, change, ambiguity, and an apparent lack of control. Thus, we become perplexed and frustrated when our well-conceived strategies and plans don't work or fall short of expectations.

- Detailed vs. Dynamic Complexity
- Chaos, Order and Self-Organization
- Emergence, Networks and Bifurcation
- Reinforcing and Counteracting Feedback (forces of change and resistance)
- Change, Stability and Growth

Learning the Systems Thinking Language

Systems Thinking provides a powerful tool set (language) for dealing with complexity and consensus decision-making. The systems thinking language shows how cause and effect unfold over time and *why* they are *not* close in time and space. Systems Thinking tools help to identify the *unintended consequences* of actions and policies and why and how these effects recur and persist. They help leaders to see beyond day-to-day *events* by understanding recurring patterns through Causal Loop mapping.

- Uncovering Complexity: What is a Causal Loop Map?
- How events, patterns, systemic structures and mental models are linked?
- How to foresee growth, decline and stability?
- How to read 'organizational temperature'? Lessons from "thermostat"
- How to identify and reverse vicious cycles?
- Case Exercise: Reconciling Strategy and Operations

Understanding Generic Structures

Why, despite our best efforts, certain unwanted patterns occur over and over again?
 Why leaders and organizations get trapped in endless quick fixes and fire-fighting?
 Why organizations underestimate 'limits to growth' in their policies and decisions?
 Why organizations and firms get trapped in escalating competition and price wars?
 Why most interventions backfire and create undesirable side effects?
 Why organizational 'addictions' persist and cause their demise?
 Find the answers in generic systems patterns (Systems Archetypes)

- Systems Thinking in Practice:
 Examples from diverse organizations, industries, and governments around the world

Leverage, Delay and Intervention

We often mistake symptoms for the cause. Hence, our strategies tend to focus on the 'wrong' issues. We are also oblivious to systemic delays that mask cause and effect relationships. Hence, we frequently change directions, introduce new initiatives and abandon otherwise good initiatives that appear not to be working. In doing so, we de-stabilize the system (organization, community, etc) causing vicious spirals and low morale.

- Why over-intervention is counterproductive? The perils of decision delays
- Worse-before-better & Better-before-worse syndromes
- Case Exercise – dynamics of quality, production and business performance

Group Workshop - Modelling Issues at Your Organization

During this workshop, the participants will work in small groups (3-5) on real issues related to their organizations. Key issues will be identified and selected by the participants themselves. They will then apply Systems Thinking tools to model complex issues and will identify leverage points and intervention strategies.

The workshop will conclude with discussion and feedback on each issue. The pathway to implementation will then be identified and chartered.

Systems Thinking and Organizational Learning

Organizational Learning (OL) is about enhancing *collective intelligence* in groups and organizations. In this session we link Systems Thinking to organizational learning and their implications for innovation and leadership.

- What is organizational learning? The five core capabilities of OL
- How can organizations learn? Double loop learning
- What are the 'fatal' learning disabilities of organizations?
- Shared vision and mental models: Top down or emergent?
- Leaders' real role: Creating learning organizations
- How to create learning teams as a stepping stone to OL?

Dynamic Strategy Simulation

In this session we use a decision simulator game to practice strategic thinking and team learning. Participants will interact in small teams in a virtual organization and learn about their own decision-making style and performance in complex scenarios.

- The myth of 'Management Teams'
- What is a Practice Field?
- Workshop: Dynamic Strategy Simulation
- *Debrief*: Seven Common Pitfalls of Decision Making

Who Should Attend?

Senior management from private, public or volunteer sectors. The following roles, in particular, will benefit from the tools and insights learned in this course.

- CEOs
- Senior Managers (CFO, CIO, CMO, Heads of Strategy)
- Divisional Managers
- Senior Functional Managers

Expected Outcomes

At the conclusion of the workshop, participants will be able to use **Systems Thinking** concepts and tools to model and explain complex and dynamic scenarios related to growth, stability, and change, as well as management processes such as strategic planning, project and performance management, cross sectoral management, supply chain, and most importantly peoples' systems. They will be able to recognise the dynamic and interdependent nature of recurring problems and to identify key leverage points for lasting interventions.

Presentation Style

Workshop style and contents are pitched at the senior professional level (i.e., MBA). The workshop is participatory and interactive and will incorporate presentations, group discussion, video, case studies, and computer simulation sessions (Strategy Lab). Participants will work in small groups throughout the course.

Course notes and cases are based on the training book: [Introduction to Systems Thinking](#) (by Maani & Cavana, Pearson education). The book can be ordered online and from bookshop. Upon request, it can be provided to course participants.

What previous attendees say

- *The best training I have ever attended!*
- *The best training our organization has ever provided*
- *A fascinating course*
- *Leading edge content*
- *A new approach to looking at problems*
- *I am trying to apply this to everything I do and see*
- *Learning labs are great*
- *Taught me to think differently*
- *Very challenging and thought provoking*
- *An excellent, excellent, excellent course*

"Totally brilliant – beyond my expectations and has sparked new patterns of learning! This new level of thinking is something I want to build on. Opening my eyes to the reality of interrelationships in events, patterns, systemic structures and mental models - From this day on my head is officially out of the sand! Thanks for such an inspiring experience!"

Ann Calman
Director, Human Resources
Nokia (South East Asia)

"Thinking Strategically and Managing Complexity challenges the dominant model of strategic planning and problem solving in the modern organization . Well presented with practical case studies, the course contrasts the traditional planning model with strategic thinking as the emergent approach using systems thinking as a language for interpreting and managing our increasingly complex environment."

Matt Bartlett
Head of Strategy
ASB Bank

"When I first considered joining the workshop I wondered how much I could gain given that managing complexity is part of my everyday role. But by the end of the second day I was amazed at how much I'd learnt and how much of that I would be able to apply. Much of this I think is the balance of team interaction during the sessions as well being able to hear from Kambiz himself about the latest developments in management thinking. The range of backgrounds and the high calibre of the people on the course also give an opportunity to hear about what's happening in other pro-active organization s."

Matthew Ensor
Manager, Transportation
Beca

"The Thinking Strategically & Managing Complexity workshop was an extremely enlightening introduction to and development of the concepts of systems thinking. It was presented with an appropriate balance of practical workshop exercise backed up by theory. The facilitator, Kambiz Maani, demonstrated a thorough understanding of the topics and communicated this to the class with enthusiasm and humour. The course allowed all participants to interact with Kambiz and each other. I became familiar with a number of techniques that will undoubtedly prove useful in the workplace. This course would be ideal for any middle/senior manager who is presented with problems that have multiple variables or aspects to solve concurrently."

Ed Overy

GM, Air New Zealand

"I really enjoyed your presentation at Transportation Research Board and believe it was one of the best I experienced all week! I served as Federal Highway Administration Chief Knowledge Officer for the prior 7 years and can relate to the context of data to information to knowledge to wisdom. Thanks very much for your "wisdom" and sharing your work with us. I do hope to order a copy of your book for further reading."

Mike Burk, PE
Chief, Partnership Programs for Workforce Development
Federal Highway Administration
USA

"Your workshop "Building Multi-Stakeholder Consensus Decisions using Systems Thinking Language" introduced a new perspective on looking at organizations, leadership and, specifically, building consensus by utilizing "systems thinking". The workshop was inspiring to us all."

Camille Crichton-Sumners
Manager, Bureau of Research
New Jersey Department of Transportation

"Dear Professor Kambiz,
I would like to express my appreciation for you to teach us the topic "Systems Thinking for Strategic Leadership" over the weekend in Singapore. It was very rewarding to learn about this subject in a very systematic and structured approach. It empowers us to view issues integratively and holistically. This learning is going to impact the rest of my life. Not only you are able to apply active listening, but you are also very effective in getting the message across concisely with real life examples. It is powerful, indeed. I really enjoyed this learning experience tremendously. Keep up the excellent skills and know-how in teaching!"

Gordon Yiu
Senior Financial Analyst
Sun Microsystems
Singapore

"I would suggest we send as many managers of ours as possible to attend this course at first priority. This course is distinctively different from any other courses in any EMBA program... It was the only "non-linear" knowledge in the program in contrast to all other "linear" ones, and it will definitely pay off very quickly."

Dr. Kent Koh
EMBA, Helsinki School of Economics,
Taiwan

"The Best Course I have ever attended"

Joseph G. Leonti - Chief Information Technology Officer
Office of Ohio Secretary of State
USA

Kambiz Maani has provided the corner stone learning for our Extending Horizons Program. This Program is designed to add new dimensions to the knowledge and skills of future leaders. The participants have been provided with an excellent mix of theory and practical applications of Systems Thinking modeling. Kambiz's knowledge, presentation style, and content gain favourable comments from all involved. We are extremely pleased that Kambiz has been available to modify people's thinking in respect to examining complex issues.

Brain Nowell, General Manager
Customer Services and Quality
Fisher & Paykel

Systems Thinking has put a new perspective on looking at issues and problems. Like many people I have traditionally approached problems with a linear thought process. Kambiz has given me the tools so that I can look at each "event" and how it may impact or relate to other events or activities. I can thoroughly recommend Systems Thinking to anybody interested in learning how to tackle complex or seemingly difficult issues.

Steve Haines, Marketing Manager
SKF

This workshop was highly stimulating, presenting new perspectives and methods which I found to my delight were immediately applicable in my work. Kambiz is responsive and encouraging and the mix of interactive teaching and small group activities supported by excellent reading material facilitated understanding and learning.

Judith Baranyai, Clinical Director
Greenlane Hospital

Systems Thinking provided me with a new way of looking at problems. It gave me tools to look more deeply at issues and ways around them. This course enabled me to understand complex relationships and to explain causalities through dynamic loops.

Elizabeth Jones, Manager
Statistics NZ

The Systems Thinking course certainly gave me new tools to analyze business situations. Being able to develop models for constantly changing processes increases one's ability to understand, and therefore make better decisions.

John Humphrey, Manager
Optus, Australia

The systems thinking course provided me with a new way of looking at situations and problems. By using a causal loop thinking approach, the systems thinking course has enabled me to mentally model situations in order to gain a holistic understanding."

Reece Kingi - Senior Engineer
Clear Communications

"Systems Thinking has proved a powerful and relevant management and leadership tool enabling me to identify issues that impact, often some distance from the source, on business. The course is stimulating and interesting and I intend to further my understanding of the techniques in relation to establishing a thinking business."

Tony Roddan - CEO
Taupo Events Centre

Related Courses

This course provides a powerful thinking framework and a tool kit related to:

- Strategic Thinking
- Emotional Intelligence (EI)
- Scenario Thinking and Planning

About Kambiz Maani



Kambiz is an author and inspirational speaker on Systems Thinking, Complexity, Leadership, and Organizational Learning and a collaborator of Dr Peter Senge, the best-selling author of *The Fifth Discipline*. Dr. Maani's academic and consulting career spans over 40 years in the USA, Asia, Australasia, and South America. Kambiz has lectured internationally and has been a visiting faculty at a number of universities including MIT, Boston University and Helsinki School of Economics.

Professor Maani is an acknowledged international expert on systemic approaches to organizations and leadership. Professor Maani was the AgResearch Founding Chair of Systems Thinking and Practice at The University of Queensland, Australia. Prior to that he was Head of Management and Systems Sciences at the University of Auckland Business School where he founded the Business School Division satellite campus. His most recent leadership role was the Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (research) at Massey University Business School.

Kambiz's executive courses on Systems Thinking and Leadership have been offered internationally for the past 25 years, receiving rave reviews from professional participants.

His corporate and government clients include Aetna Health, KPMG, UNISYS, Morgan & Banks, Rand Corp, Digital Corp, Caterpillar Corp., Tianjin Hi-Tech Group (China), NZ Ministry of Health (MOH), Mercy Hospital, Zuellig Pharma, ACC, UniChem, Fisher & Paykel, TVNZ, Babbage- Simmel (USA), Fletcher Challenge, CHH, Royal NZ Navy, Fairfax, Southern Cross Healthcare, Meridian Energy, Dept of CYF, ADIS International, and Ministry of Transport (Taiwan), The Golden Group (Taiwan), RITI (Egypt), CAIT (Rutgers University, USA), Fonterra NZ, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (NZ), MAF Policy (NZ), MAF Biosecurity (NZ), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA, Australia) CDRC (Australia), UNICEF Man and Biosphere (Viet Nam), Ministry of Tourism (Cambodia) and more. His leading book (with R. Cavana): [Systems Thinking, System Dynamics- Managing Change and Complexity](#) (2nd edition Prentice Hall) is taught at universities, governments, corporations and multinationals worldwide.