

Systems Thinking...is finding patterns and relationships,
and learning to reinforce or change these patterns to fulfill your vision and mission.

CONCEPT #2

12 Natural Laws of Living Systems on Earth

Best Practices

vs.

Traditional Human Dynamics

I. THE WHOLE SYSTEM: "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts."

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| 1. Wholism —Overall broader perspectives, Ends/Purpose-Focused, Synergy | 1. Parts Focused —Suboptimal Results, Narrower Views, Means |
| 2. Open Systems —To the Environment, Regular Scanning, "Outside-In", Implications Clear | 2. Closed Systems —Low Environmental Scanning or Concern, Parts-Focused |
| 3. Boundaries —Clarity of System, Integrated, Fit, Collaborative, Complementary | 3. Fragmented/Inflexible —Turf Battles, Voids, Overlaps, Duplication |
| 4. Input/Output —How Natural Systems Operate, "Backwards Thinking" | 4. Sequential —Linear, Mechanistic, Piecemeal/Analytic, Forecasts |
| 5. Feedback —On Effectiveness, Results, "Feedback is a gift", Encourage It. | 5. Low Feedback —Financial Only Fear, Defensiveness, Lack of Measures |
| 6. Multiple Outcomes —Goal seeking at all levels (WIIFM)—"What's In It For Me?" | 6. Conflict —Artificial "Either/Or" Thinking "Yes, but", One Result Only |

II. THE INNER WORKINGS: Synergy, Relationships and Interdependence

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| 7. Equifinality —Flexible and Adaptive, Empower the Means, More than One Way To Do It | 7. Direct Cause-Effect —1 Best Way, Quick Fix Fails, Activity-Focused |
| 8. Entropy —Follow-up/Inputs of Energy, Renewal, "Booster Shots" needed | 8. Natural Decline —Obsolescence, Rigidity and Death |
| 9. Hierarchies —Flatter Organization/Self Organizing, Productive Order Emerges | 9. Bureaucracy —Command and Control, Policy Paramount, Centralize Decisions |
| 10. Relationships-Related Parts —Patterns, Webs, Interdependence and Leverage, Fit | 10. Separate Parts —Components, Silos, Individualism, Parts are Primary |
| 11. Dynamic Equilibrium —Maintain Stability and Balance/Culture, Self-Regulating, (disequilibrium on the edge) | 11. Resistance to Change —Myopic View Ruts, Habits, Root Causes delayed in Time and Space |
| 12. Internal Elaboration —Details and Sophistication, Clarity and Simplicity | 12. Complexity —and Confusion/Chaos |

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- In Systems Thinking, the Whole is Primary, and the parts are Secondary.
- In Analytic Thinking, the parts are Primary and the Whole is Secondary.