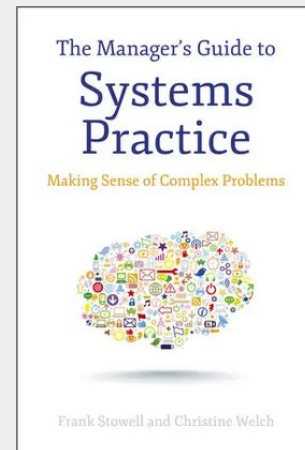


The Manager's Guide to Systems Practice

This book is an ideal resource for busy managers whose time is scarce. It provides a rapid introduction to straightforward, yet powerful ideas that enable users to address real world problems. Systems theory and practice is predominantly a framework for thinking about the World, in which holistic views are maintained. In this respect it contrasts with some familiar techniques of management science, in which problem situations are broken down into their constituent parts with resultant loss of coherence.

This book is the result of several years experience of using and teaching Systems concepts, methods and techniques. The motivation for the text arose out of workshops for managers, and from teaching Systems concepts to undergraduate or postgraduates, where we were often asked 'What should I read in order to gain an overview of the principles and ideas used in Systems?' We found that this question was a difficult one to answer because the available literature comprises mainly books and articles dedicated to particular perspectives or methodologies which have concentrated upon a particular theoretical perspective. We have then tried to address the question by providing insight into some basic ideas and methods as well as some underpinning ideas behind the approaches. We have tried to meet the needs of three groups. First, to provide support for managers who attend professional development workshops in which Systems methods or techniques are explored. This text provides a primer to assist them in consolidating the practical skills and knowledge acquired at the workshops. Second, the book supports members of academic communities (staff and students) who need a text that provides both a practical and a theoretical guide to Systems ideas. The third group are those already well versed in using Systems ideas as a framework for thinking about complex issues who wish for a reference work with which to add to their knowledge. Those who will find this text useful will include members of the UK Systems Society, the Systems Practice for Managing Complexity Network, the International Society for Systems Science or one of the many Systems Societies from around the World as well as students studying one of the large number of Systems based modules offered in university programmes. The text is divided into four sections which are intended to satisfy the beginner, who may be attending a one day workshop (Chapters 1 - 3), the learner who wishes to understand how the various ideas from Systems can be brought together as problem solving methods (Chapters 4 and 5); and the advanced learner who wishes to understand the theory behind the practice and the origins of modern Systems thinking and practice (Chapters 6 and 7). A fourth section (Chapters 8 and 9) provides case studies that can be used in a classroom situation. This book is an ideal resource for busy managers whose time is scarce. It provides a rapid introduction to straightforward, yet powerful ideas that enable users to address real world problems. Systems theory and practice is predominantly a framework for thinking about the World, in which holistic views are maintained. In this respect it contrasts with some familiar techniques of management science, in which problem situations are broken down into their constituent parts with resultant loss of coherence. Having said that emeritus, we do not see Systems thinking as a rival to the techniques of management science but rather as complementary tools within a manager's armoury.



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