



Systems Thinking: Managing Chaos and Complexity - A Platform for Designing Business Architecture

Jamshid Gharajedaghi

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This book is a direct result of the author's work with the systems methodology first introduced by the author's partner, Russell Ackoff.

It's a holistic approach to systems methodology. It deals with all dimensions of a system: structure, function and process. Peter Senge introduced Systems Thinking/practice. Interact clients asked the author to write a book to take them "further down the Senge trail". This book does that by taking the reader into "real world" stories. It is based on experiences in five real companies using systems practice.

It is about a new mode of seeing, doing and being in the world; a way of thinking through chaos and complexity. It speaks to those thinkers and practitioners who have come to realize that learning "to be" is as much a necessary part of a successful professional life as is the learning "to do."

Natural science has discovered "chaos". Social science has encountered "complexity." But chaos and complexity are features of our perceptions and understanding. We see the world as increasingly more complex and chaotic because we use inadequate concepts to explain it. When we understand something, we no longer see it as chaotic or complex. It seems that playing the new game requires learning a new language. A language of interaction and design that will allow us to see through chaos and understand complexity.

In a nutshell, this book is about systems. However, it goes beyond the simple declaration of desirability of systems thinking. With a practical orientation and yet a profound theoretical depth, the book offers an operational handle on the whole by introducing an elaborate scheme called iterative design. The iterative design explicitly recognizes that choice is at the heart of human development.

Development is the capacity to choose; design is a vehicle for enhancement of choice and holistic thinking. Designers, in this book, seek to choose rather than predict the future. They try to understand rational, emotional, and cultural dimensions of choice and to produce a design that satisfies a multitude of functions. They learn how to use what they already know and also about how to learn what they need to know.

Systems Thinking: Managing Chaos and Complexity - A Platform for Designing Business Architecture Details

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From Reader Review Systems Thinking: Managing Chaos and Complexity - A Platform for Designing Business Architecture for online ebook

Jeroen says

Difficult to read, concepts not applicable for all types of organisations

Rena says

Have to read this for my class. . . and I love it. It is an amazing way of thinking. It is slow reading for me but I want everyone to read it now that I know about it.

Gernot says

The first part about systems and systems thinking describes some kind of method how to analyse systems.

- 1 - formulate the "mess" - that is the name for the current situation
- 2 - create target structures in iterations.

The second part with the examples were somehow "dry" but nevertheless valuable examples.

I will come back to the examples and will read the book a second time, so I can recommend it!

Annie Constantinescu says

I wouldn't necessarily turn to this book if you're looking for a thrilling read - BUT, Gharajedaghi's work on organizational management and systems thinking is along some of the best work in the field (similar to Ackoff). Gharajedaghi manages to convey complex system analysis principles in digestible ways - which if you've ever studied systems, is REALLY helpful.

Roberto says

Unlike the Fifth Discipline, this is a book about systems thinking that is quite difficult to read, for mainly two reasons: the brief discussion that is made by very important principles (the principles that guide a system, for example), without further examples, and the apparent lack of organization on writing it.

Some of the important points:

- A system is influenced by 5 "building blocks": openness (the size of its transactional environment), or

Peter House says

The last few chapters of the book focus on case studies such as the Marriot hotel franchise chain and the Oneida Nation. These prescriptions show what a successful design for an organization might look like to the reader. The only complaint I might have regarding the book is that it goes out with a meow in contrast to the way it entered. With a mighty roar. Despite the tapering off at the end of the book, I would recommend it for any reader with an interest in why organizations, in general, are unsuccessful in remaining viable in a world where black swan events (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_sw...) seem to occur with greater frequency than before.

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This was very philosophical. It had some good quotes and graphics, but overall, I was hoping for something more practical, discussing how we can use systems in our organization to help structure them better.

[illegible]

on complexity and systems theory, it's difficult to critique because the subject matter is generally the same but its presentation is unique (different vocabulary, ordering, etc.). Having already read or studied some of the background material helped; not sure I would have wanted to tackle this as my introduction to the literature.

The second half of the book is application, and is interesting, but my learning curve (and interest) tapered off pretty drastically after chapter 7.

Chris Waddle says

Nice book about the critical need to architect companies in a way that attends to the individuals that make up the company as purposeful actors who act in the system as voluntary actors who have a need for personal agency. Organisation who do well need to constitute themselves using systems thinking like presented in this book.
