



Tom Romito

FACILITATOR

FACILITATION AND SYSTEMS THINKING

I'm Tom Romito. I'm a facilitator and I work with organizations that want to improve themselves. Sometimes organizations feel they are overwhelmed with barriers that keep them from achieving their goals. As a result, their efforts become fragmented and unfocused. I show them how to deal with this situation by thinking in terms of a process. This process is called systems thinking.

Many thinkers have been writing about systems thinking for a long time, most notably Peter Senge, who wrote a book entitled "The Fifth Discipline." Over the 24 years that I have been a facilitator, I have come to understand that I basically use this process when I work with organizations and groups of people.

I explain to groups that what's overwhelming them are forces that are all interrelated. They are not mutually exclusive. They include factors such as root causes and individual perspectives. I help them analyze these factors in order to understand how they got to where they are now and where to go from here.

An example is when I conduct a strategic planning process with a group of people. I get the group to list all of the barriers that they believe are keeping them from achieving their goal, including the causes and the consequences of not removing them. Then we begin to develop strategies to break down the barriers.

The first step I introduce to them in systems thinking is the clear identification of their goal. Some groups insist that they have many goals, but I bring them around to the reality that they can only have one goal. Everything else is

subordinate to and supportive of that goal. One group I worked with struggled for several weeks trying to reach consensus on their goal. Once they get past that, it's easier to identify the barriers that are impeding them from achieving it.

Society is overwhelmed with complexity. No one and no entity is immune from it. Understanding systems thinking will help us all to deal with it.