

In This Issue

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Welcome to issue 3 of *Reflections*. Several of the articles in this issue revolve around a theme based on an intellectual tradition that was started 50 years ago by Jay Forrester. It is with great pleasure that we showcase Forrester and some of his students. We also invite you to meet Gary Hamel, one of the world's leading thinkers in the field of strategy and learning.

Classics

In the human arena certain insights need to be stated over and over again. It is fun and important to bring back the classics. Forrester's 1965 article on organizations is as relevant today as it was then. Comments from Daniel Kim, a seasoned consultant and a former student in the field of system dynamics, and Georgianna Bishop, a practicing manager in a public institution, attest to this.

Features

We begin with John Sterman's article displaying a set of concepts and a modeling tool that informs our understanding of human cognition, and especially its limitations. Sterman, more than anyone else in this field, has shown how system dynamics—the research methodology and simulation—can be used to test important hypotheses about the long- and short-range consequences of how managers think and make decisions. This is an academic article that needs to be read slowly and carefully. While Ray Stata, the founder and president of Analog Devices, seems to be more optimistic about our capacity to learn and improve than Sterman, Richard Karash, a consultant experimenting with these tools for a while, expresses deeper concerns about Sterman's approach to learning and argues the impossibility of results with certainty.

We follow with another of Forrester's protégés, Peter Senge, who brings his organizational learning point of view and systemic approach to the field of education in a talk delivered in 1998. Readers will find his view of the learning process enlightening and will have to reflect on how much or how little of this kind of learning actually occurs in our educational system. An educator and national administrator of a national school reform program, Edward Joyner, comments on Senge's assumptions about the learning process in schools. Jay Forrester brings real-life examples of the impact of system dynamics pioneered in many schools.

The application of systems thinking to the practical problems of organizations trying to work together is well illustrated by Jennifer Kemeny (another student of Forrester) and her colleague at Innovation Associates, Joel Yanowitz. Drawing from their consulting experience, Kemeny and Yanowitz reveal the key obstacles to cross-organizational relationships and offer a roadmap for action. Managers will find this article on strategic alliances of great interest as attested to by Linda Pierce from Shell Oil Company and Anil Paranjpe from British Telecom.

We close this section with a conversation with Gary Hamel who is not shy about telling us what is missing in current concepts of strategic thinking. This is a most stimulating and enlightening interview conducted by Otto Scharmer. It certainly deserves a careful look, as it is an invitation to rethink strategy and the underlying mental models.

We continue to explore new terrain in this issue. Two of our readers, Judy Brown (a consultant) and Surinder Deol (from World Bank), have contributed poems. Remember, we need to hear your voice to keep the journal lively. We close with book reviews and announcements. In this issue we bring you two reviews of books that have recently been published.

Once again, please write or e-mail us your suggestions and recommendations. Let us know what you would like to see. Send all mail electronically to jane@sol-ne.org or to Editor, *Reflections: The SoL Journal*, 222 Third Street, Suite 2323, Cambridge, MA 02142.