Systems Thinking

A one page summary of *The Fifth Discipline* by Peter Senge

Systems Thinking is the ability to see processes, interactions and events as part of a bigger interactive process in which changes made at one point have both an effect on other parts of the system and the whole.

Systems thinking sees not only the reactions of individual systems, it sees the effect that changes within one system have on other interlocking systems. Indeed, a true systems thinker will see the world as a series of interlocking and interactive systems.

The key benefit of systems thinking is to be able to foresee the effect of interventions in any system and ensure that the intervention is made in the right place and in the right system to achieve the desired result.

It can be summed up a the ability to see the "big picture" and understand how it works as a mosaic of interconnected models or systems.

Systems thinkers understand that:

- Current problems are often caused by previous solutions made in good faith by non-systems thinkers
- Forced solutions to problems will hit back with bigger problems
- Results from problem solutions often show short-term gains before exposing the longer term detrimental results
- Quick-fix solutions simply cycle back to the beginning
- Problem solutions invariably become worse than the initial problem itself
- The quicker the fix, the slower the real issue is resolved
- Systems are rarely understood because cause and effect within the system are not closely related in time and space
- Small changes, correctly applied, often produce the biggest results
- It is possible to have everything you want ... it is just that it is unlikely that you will get it all at the same time
- Dividing a system in two does not create two systems
- Systems work without blame ... they just are

(Summarised from the book "*The Fifth Discipline*" by Peter M Senge)