



Systems Concepts in Action: A Practitioner's Toolkit

By Bob Williams, Richard Hummelbrunner



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Systems Concepts in Action: A Practitioner's Toolkit explores the application of systems ideas to investigate, evaluate, and intervene in complex and messy situations. The text serves as a field guide, with each chapter representing a method for describing and analyzing; learning about; or changing and managing a challenge or set of problems. The book is the first to cover in detail such a wide range of methods from so many different parts of the systems field. The book's Introduction gives an overview of systems thinking, its origins, and its major subfields. In addition, the introductory text to each of the book's three parts provides background information on the selected methods. *Systems Concepts in Action* may serve as a workbook, offering a selection of tools that readers can use immediately. The approaches presented can also be investigated more profoundly, using the recommended readings provided. While these methods are not intended to serve as "recipes," they do serve as a menu of options from which to choose. Readers are invited to combine these instruments in a creative manner in order to assemble a mix that is appropriate for their own strategic needs.

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Editorial Review

Review

"This book presents well-written and accessible accounts of a variety of systems methods, methodologies, and models; a veritable treasure-trove from which the critical systems thinker can choose in constructing appropriate systemic responses to complex situations." (Michael C. Jackson *Hull University Business School, author of Systems Thinking: Creative Holism for Managers and Systems Approaches to Management*)

"This book stands out as an invaluable, fresh, and practical guide to the use of systems concepts from two internationally recognized practitioners. Bob Williams and Richard Hummelbrunner not only document ideas for managing complexity, change, and uncertainty from wide ranging areas of application, but also they draw upon a wealth of invaluable personal knowledge—the bedrock of reflective practice that underpins the effective use of systems tools." (Martin Reynolds *The Open University, co-editor of Systems Approaches to Managing Change: A Practical Guide*)

"This book is written for those who want to intervene in the world, but are aware that brute force methods often prove inappropriate—if not counterproductive. *Systems Concepts in Action* provides a toolbox of methods for harnessing systemic thinking to instigate custom tailored, creative solutions. If you ever felt that systems theory is abstract and noninstructive, then have a read!" (Wolfgang Hofkirchner, President, Bertalanffy Center for the Study of Systems Science)

"The book promises *and delivers*: tested and practical methods for understanding and taking action in messy situations; inquiry approaches for describing, analyzing, learning about, managing, and changing complex situations; a coherent systems framework for thinking and acting systemically. The authors compare 19 systems approaches, and do so comprehensively, insightfully, exquisitely." (Michael Quinn Patton)

"The book demonstrates convincingly that systems approaches to evaluation are more than 'spaghetti diagram' logic models. With clear introductions to many different approaches, and how they can be used for evaluation, it will be indispensable for evaluators and evaluation commissioners. It's bound to become dog-eared and shabby on my book shelf." (Patricia Rogers *Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology*)

About the Author

Bob Williams is an organizational consultant and evaluator. He is coeditor of *Systems Concepts in Evaluation: An Expert Anthology*. Richard Hummelbrunner is a consultant in the field of local and regional development. He is coauthor of *Instrumente systemischen Handelns: Eine Erkundungstour*.

Users Review

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