



The Importance of Change

There is a fundamental problem with most organizations. Their management system's purpose is to control the business. **A new purpose should be to learn and control the business.**

Over the past few decades, we have greatly improved our systemic approach to business. In fact, the pendulum has swayed too far in that direction. A *system* is made up of parts working together for a common goal, like a product or service. We must have effective, robust systems, but we have focused on policies, procedures, and training with a belief we can design a system that will eliminate error. The system will certainly help, but we must also address the most critical part of our systems; the part we cannot touch or easily see, the part people play.

Systems are made up of policies, procedures, processes, rules, guidelines, equipment, tools, and, of course, human beings. These systems are then practiced on a foundation of core values. This results in an interdependence that can be very good or very wrong. These systems weave a complex web that keeps any individual within an organization from being able to really change anything. Individuals expend great effort working to achieve their desired goals, not realizing the opposition sprouts from the very system designed to aid in productivity. For example, an entire organization will be able to identify poor results and agree they are not acceptable, yet continue to work the same way and reap the same results. Our interdependence binds us in an often very unhealthy way.

There seems to be a major player hiding in the shadows of our organizations. Our inability to effectively address problems is evidence of Latency. Latency, as defined by Failsafe Network, is The Way We Are or The Way We Do Business. Latency is formed from the unique culture within our organization and is the underlying cause of our problems. Everyone within an organization unknowingly contributes to Latency. It's the aggregate of each person's contribution that gives Latency its power. It is like gravity, it affects everything we do, but we rarely notice it. It is difficult to see because we think the problem is outside of ourselves; we do not see our contribution, and therefore we do not change or improve. That is also why no one individual can offer a solution to prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future. To address Latency we must all, as an organization, sway in the right direction. Addressing the things we see like

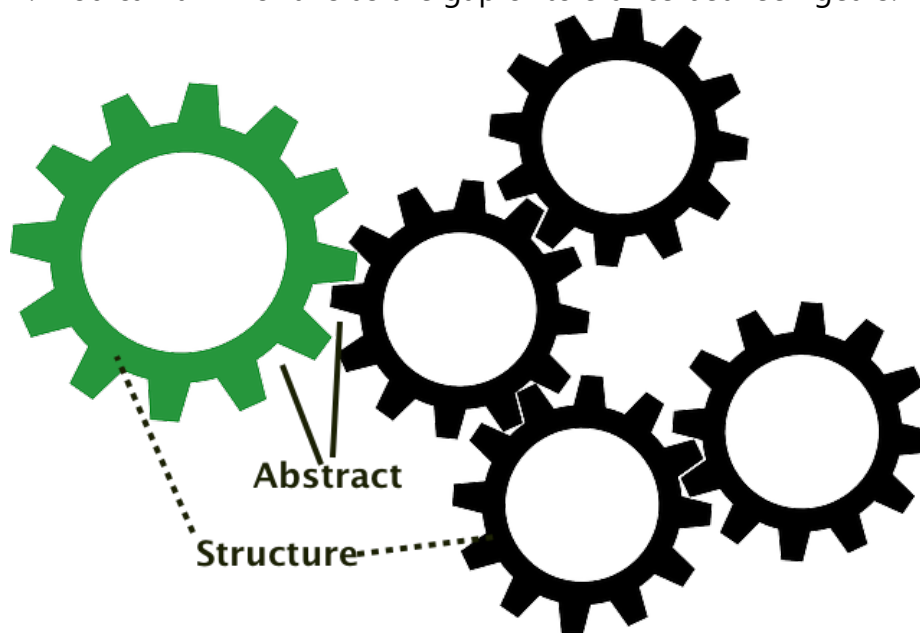


policies, checklists, and procedures, will never effectively address the true cause of our problems: Latency.

The ants, or people performing their day-to-day duties, know there's a problem and have repeatedly tried to solve it, get help, and highlight it, but to no avail. The people in the hierarchy of the organization also recognize problems and attempt to solve them, highlight them, and get help, but to no avail. The resulting frustration and attitudes are what contribute to Latency.

The resulting interdependence within our systems opposes the cry to adapt as the individual parts recognize, call for, and respond to change. The highest value in any repetitive process that is present in our systems are the components that make up the structure of the system; the policies, procedures, workflows, etc. The highest value dealing with change make up the abstract parts of the system; the people and their unique qualities, the ability to change at a moment's notice, hindered only by the structure and the culture (Latency) within the system. **If people are the key to an organization's resilience or lack thereof, then the system is the lock.**

The end of the structure of a system is the beginning of the abstract parts of the same system. You can think of this as the gap or tolerance between gears.





The gap results where the structure falls short, which then requires the innovation of people for continuity. This gap is both needed and critical for efficient operation. **The gap is what determines the flexibility and growth potential of an organization.** A gap too tight cannot adapt easily, which results in increased friction, decreased life, and, ultimately, failure. A gap too wide relies on unique individuals as the only answer to keep the system working. This takes a great toll on the other parts, with increased wear, inefficiency, and, ultimately, failure.

There are instances when an employee will face circumstances that the system cannot process. These instances are usually not routine but 'one-off' situations. These can be ignored by following the current structure of the system or be dealt with to the best of a person's ability. Time is almost always a critical factor since, by definition, a system is made up of moving parts producing a product or service, much like an assembly line. **The system waits for no one.** This places people in an unusual situation to handle a problem that may lie outside of their job description, outside of the system, and may require a 'workaround' to address effectively. A 'workaround' is an unwritten process or way of dealing with this type of problem. These workarounds are evidence of Latency. Since it's unwritten it is only known by the one or the few who deal with it. When they aren't there then the problem resurfaces and must be addressed.

If we have learned anything from our past quests into the causes of our failures, it is that small problems cause big problems. More accurately, **unresolved small problems cause big ones.** We know any time someone knows what they ought to do but chooses not to do it, a failure is set in motion. We call this the Conservation of Wretchedness. Not addressing a small problem is exactly what causes bigger problems. There may be very legitimate reasons they are not addressed, like time, money, or lack of other resources, but unfortunately, they are still what cause Big problems. These unresolved small problems reside in the gap within our systems. They are addressed to the best of people's ability based on the resources they have available. The result may be simply living with the problem or ignoring it. **Therefore, organizations that are sincere about wanting to avoid catastrophic incidents must address the gap by identifying and learning from the small problems confronting people every day.**

To effectively do this and address Latency, people must discover their own role in the things that go wrong. How? The answer is to use Advocates, people trained in Latent Cause Analysis who are passionate about helping people and organizations learn



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from things that go wrong without hurting them in the process. Advocates lead LCAs, coach others, track latent causes, and make the invisible visible. *Advocates play a critical role in driving change within an organization's management systems.* They are instrumental in helping the organization take the next step, learn, and gain better control of the business. In fact, **Advocates are key to an organization's success.**