

Interconnectedness Interconnectedness

Everything is part of, and comprised of, complex systems. That being true, everything exists in relationship to something else. Relationships are all there is. These ideas are gleaned from studying the new science of Quantum Physics. The old question, "If a tree falls in the forest, and there is nothing there to hear it, does it make a sound?", comes from Quantum Physics. The answer, according to this new science, is no, there is no sound. The reason is that for there to be a sound something has to measure it, hear it. Otherwise, it is just vibrating air. Sound requires a receptor. This all sounds very esoteric, and maybe is splitting hairs semantically speaking. However, we have examples of it in our own lives. A friend of mine and I have a common acquaintance. My friend sees this man as arrogant, and dislikes him with every fiber of her being. I have overlooked some of his character flaws, and consider him one of the brightest people I know. If I could see this man through friend's eyes, I would not recognize him. The same would be true if my mother saw through my eyes. So, what exists is not my friend, our acquaintance, and me, but the relationship we have with each other. The following may not be a politically correct example, but it illustrates my point. Have you ever noticed that sometimes you will meet someone that is very attractive, but after getting to know more about him or her, you find the person to be not so attractive? They did not change physically, the relationship between you and this other person changed and manifested itself by changing what you perceived.

There is an old Sufi saying I am fond of:

You think because you understand 1 you must also understand 2 because 1 and 1 makes 2; but you must also understand AND.

Understanding relationships is crucial. Consequently, one of the things a manager, actually everyone, needs to be aware of is how to manage the relationships found in all complex systems, or at the very least be aware of them. By relationship I do not mean only people to people relationships, but the relationships between all the parts of whatever complex system being dealt with. That could be people-to-people, department-to department, department to company, and so on. And remember, it is not just one relationship at a time we need to be aware of, but all the myriad relationships we have in our life and their relationship to everything else.

Thinking about these relationships, and how to deal with them, can make your head hurt. But by being aware, you do not need to know the mathematics or psychology of it in order to understand, and use, the concept; any more than you need to understand the mathematics of gravity, friction, orbital dynamics, or the Bernoulli Effect etc. to throw a baseball and hit a target.

Whatever you are dealing with cannot be visualized or dealt with as though it was just one isolated thing having no other relationships, like the line below.

It is actually better represented by the diagram to the right. Dealing with the things as this more complex interconnected system, provides a richer, more satisfying, and ultimately a more useful way to view the world and solve problems.

