

Systems Thinking: the Leaders Summit

Agenda

9:00 Registration
 9:30 Welcome and introduction
John Seddon

9:45 **Systems Thinking in housing services**
An economic benchmark

Owen Buckwell, Head of Housing, Portsmouth City Council, and Ian Gilson, Director, Comserv
 Portsmouth City Council worked with Comserv and Multi Trade Supplies to achieve an economic benchmark in Portsmouth's housing repairs service: repairs are provided on the day and specific time that tenants request them and completed to a high quality on the first visit. Most managers of repair services would argue that it couldn't be done or it would be massively expensive; in fact it is less costly; between them Portsmouth and Comserv/MTS have halved the average cost of a repair. The features of the design will make conventional managers worry, as they are based on some unconventional but counterintuitive truths.

10:30 **Break**

11:00 **Systems Thinking in financial services**
Benny Devos, Head of ICO Belgium, BNP Paribas Fortis
It's a thinking thing

Systems Thinking requires a switch from management based on 'assumptions', leading to a 'disabling' of the workforce, to management based on 'knowledge and understanding', leading to 'enabling' teams who's goal it becomes to delight their customers. Benny will explore the switch in management thinking and the challenges encountered: prerequisites to outstanding results.

Rob Brown, Customer Insight and Strategy Director, Aviva UK
Challenges en route

Rob will describe the lessons learned implementing Systems Thinking in a complex organisation: Senior management engagement; budgeting and planning, risk, regulation and audit: are they friends or foes? The economics of Systems Thinking – driving costs out while improving services and revenue. Why Systems Thinking is something that cannot be delegated.

12:30 **Lunch**

13:30 **Systems Thinking in local authorities: meeting the financial challenge**
Phil Badley, Service Director, Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council
It's time to stop and think!

Stockport Council's Business Improvement Transformation and Efficiency Programme is supporting the achievement of Stockport's Financial Strategy by using a combination of traditional routes and Systems Thinking. Phil will describe the progress that Stockport is making in introducing Systems Thinking, the impact on service, efficiency and morale, how Systems Thinking fits within Stockport's approach to organisational development, and the lessons that have been learned so far.

Denise Lyon, Deputy Chief Executive, East Devon District Council
Some critical thinking things

Denise will focus on the personal nature of the Systems Thinking journey: The Vanguard helper as a mind-bending hallucinogen, constantly challenging the way managers think. The revelations from studying services as systems: Holy cow are we really that bad? Studying reveals the whole picture, not just a warped version driven by PIs and budgets. But the excitement of getting real data and evidence to help you manage and improve the service your customers receive (even though you do want to curl up and die at first). The importance of senior managers taking active responsibility for operations and change, and the WOW factor: previously unimaginable results continuing long after the initial intervention.

John van de Laarschot, Chief Executive, Stoke City Council
Place-based service design

John has set about an organisational transformation which focuses on value-for-money service delivery around the demands of his customers. Taking a 'place' perspective, studying demands from a geographical area, revealed how many different ('silo') services were involved in much the same work: highways, environmental service, neighbourhood management and housing – each having their own management hierarchies, buildings, depots, logistical and equipment infrastructures. The proposition was to reconfigure the hierarchy to meet such demand in the most effective way in order to improve performance. This approach fundamentally challenges traditional functional approaches to designing and managing work. John will explain the approach, what was learned about the way they were working, how this led informed decisions to change and what has been achieved through developing a radically different demand-driven design.

15:00 **Break**

15:30 **Systems Thinking in the voluntary sector**
Steve Johnson, Chief Executive, AdviceUK
Advice turning the spotlight

AdviceUK's ground-breaking report ("It's the System Stupid") showed that advice agencies could be helping more people, were they not dealing with massive amounts of waste work ('failure demand') generated by mistakes and inefficiencies in local authority and government welfare services that are repeated over and over again. At the heart of the problem is government's obsession with 'scale' as a means to efficiency (a myth). To improve advice services AdviceUK is helping Nottingham city council and local advice agencies to work together as one system, an exemplar of what advice services could become. At the same time, AdviceUK is turning the spotlight back on government, arguing for changes in policy that would engage government departments and encourage similar collaboration across the country.

16:00 **Systems Thinking in health services**
Steve Ailder, Consultant Neurologist, Plymouth NHS Hospitals Trust
A glimpse of a better future

Most people involved in delivering healthcare know that services are not really great right now; they can be very difficult to access, care is often patchy and different parts of the system don't talk to one another very well. Most senior managers in healthcare have also read that there are potentially huge quality improvements and cost reductions available if services are redesigned. Unfortunately, what virtually nobody in the current system knows is how to approach and deliver this redesign. The necessary approach is subtly but fundamentally different from the approach currently employed. Steve will present a working example, explaining how it took him five years to really understand what Systems Thinking means but what fantastic results for patient, staff and the organisation emerge if this approach is properly used.

16:30 **John Seddon reviews the day**

16:45 **Summit close**

The Vanguard Method

The Vanguard Method is a unique approach to Systems Thinking. Change starts with studying your organisation as a system. It reveals the truth about the 'what and why' of current performance, it enables leaders to see how targets, economies of scale and current 'controls' (which don't actually control) are just some of the conventional management practices that are flawed. In studying your organisation as a system you also establish what is required to design any service against customer demands. While conventional management thought would have it that that could only lead to higher costs, it actually results in massive improvements in service, efficiency revenue and morale.

The Vanguard Method was developed by John Seddon, an occupational psychologist. The change to Systems Thinking is a change in management thinking, best achieved through seeing the counterintuitive truths first-hand. The Vanguard Method ensures that extraordinary change is made on the basis of knowledge and informed choice.

Vanguard Consulting

Vanguard consultants work in an unconventional way. Vanguard rejects report-writing, 'sending in the suits' and change by tools training and projects; common consulting practices which fail to achieve sustainable change. Vanguard consultants work alongside managers and their staff as they study and then re-design their services, transferring know-how by changing thinking.