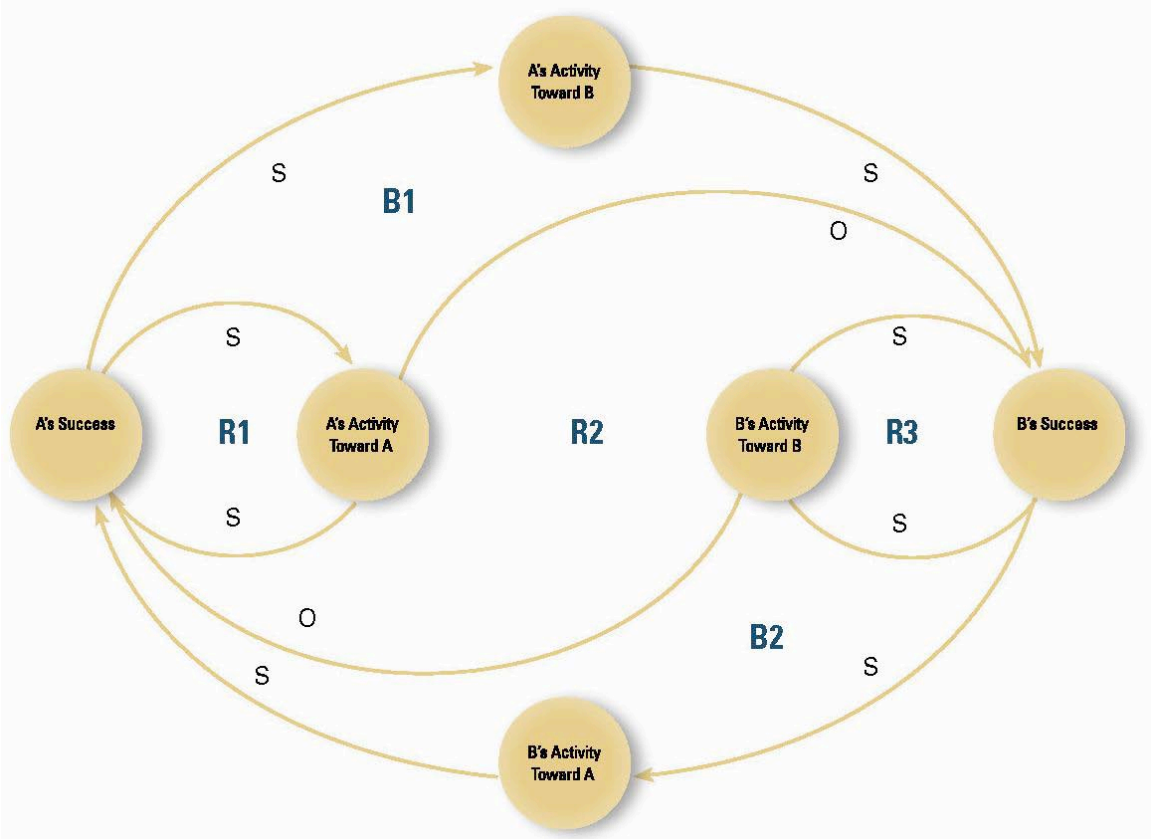
Sharing Team Experiences - Leadership, Collaboration, and Negotiation in a Learning Environment

"Perhaps for the first time in history, humankind has the capacity to create far more information than anyone can absorb, to foster far greater interdependency than anyone can imagine, and to accelerate change far faster than anyone's ability to keep pace. Certainly the scale of complexity is without preceden"t **[Senge 1991].**

***"When we try to pick up anything by itself we find it is attached to everything in the universe."* - John Muir**

Discussion: **"Accidental Adversaries"** are problems that emerge that are no one's fault, including but not limited to, scarcity of resources or resources that do not arrive on time, equipment failures, inability to meet with concerned parties that you need to help further the project, and health issues. This part of the system points out how myopic local activity, with the best of intentions, can lead to an overall limiting development for completing the project, and can actually inhibit moving the project ahead on time. This is a pattern where team members have committed to work together because they will benefit from the alliance. Each member takes actions believing that it will bring benefit to the other and if the cooperation works, they will both benefit. Problems start arising when one or both of the subjects need to fix a gap in performance, maybe due to external pressure. They initiate action to fix the gap and accidentally undermine each other's success. The result of these activities may produce a sense of resentment or frustration between the subjects or it may even turn the subjects into adversaries, thereby destroying the alliance.



Behavior: One party in a partnership unintentionally acts in a way the other party considers outside their agreement; the offended party interprets this as unfair advantage and acts to right the perceived wrong. The first party is surprised at the retaliation and responds with more retaliation. Only if they suspend their inappropriate actions and engage in dialogue can they reveal the root of their misunderstandings and gain a fresh start.

Commonly used words or early warning symptoms: I thought I was helping the team and now I am in trouble with my own work.

Tips to note when using: It is possible to achieve leverage by introducing or re-emphasizing a link between each party's successes.

Managing the Intervention: Seven action steps to deal with the unintended consequences of each party's actions:

1. Reconstruct the conditions that were the catalyst for collaboration.
2. Review the original understandings and expected mutual benefits.
3. Identify conflicting incentives that may be driving adversarial behavior.
4. Map the unintended side effects of each party's actions.
5. Develop overarching goals that align the efforts of the parties.
6. Establish metrics to monitor collaborative behavior.
7. Establish routine communication

Intervention: Potential partners strengthening understanding of one another's need, how they unintentionally undermine one another and how they can use their strengths to support one another.

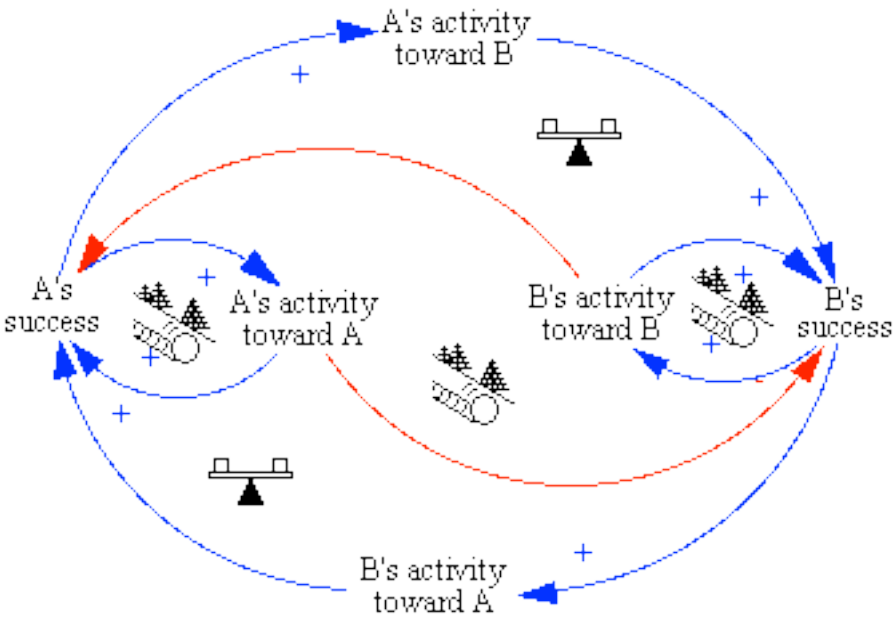
Determine:

1. What is motivating the collaboration?
2. Do the participants view the collaboration in the same way and have the same degree of motivation?
3. What are the potential obstacles that make this collaboration non productive?
4. What prior experiences have the team members learned from?
5. Leadership: Who on the team has the right stuff to engage everyone over time?
6. Is their sufficient reason to believe that there is the proper motivation and innovation at this time to see a successful collaboration happening?
7. What needs to happen and what considerations need acknowledging in order facilitating success?
8. What ground rules do you need?
9. What leadership styles should the project leader utilize to help the team move forward?

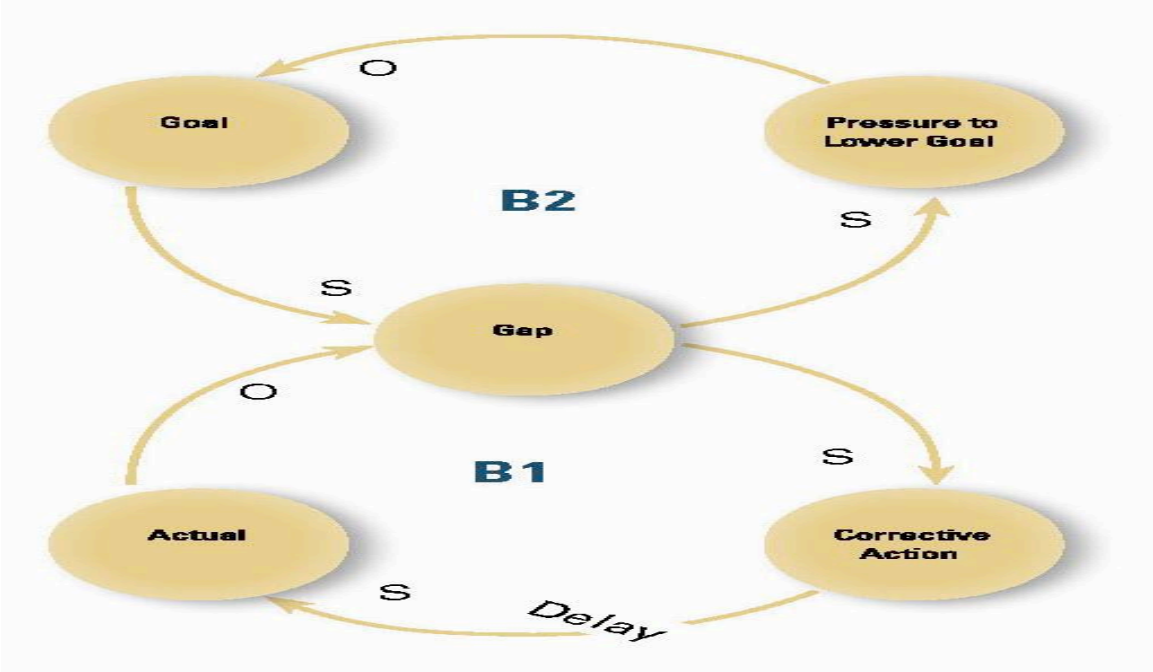
Real Life Examples

1. A failed team member alliance, in which unintentional actions such as sloppiness can be perceived as being deliberate and offensive by another team member and can then escalate in the form of retaliations until the relationship ends in conflict.

2. A company expands outlets through the use of franchisees that have to maintain standards set by the parent company, but the parent company also has its own outlets. As the company expands its own outlets to improve profitability, it moves into markets perceived by franchisees as belonging to them, resulting in lawsuits and a loss in popularity of the line of the product.



Discussion - "Drifting Goals" is when one set of goals or expectations actually inhibits the goals and expectations of another set of goals. A gap in understanding is occurring. When this gap occurs frustration mounts, the team needs to discuss and take action need to reduce anxiety and develop a better understanding on how to move forward. The gap is the lack of understanding between a goal and reality. If not discussed a team will often lower the goal to close the gap. Eventually, the lowering of the goal leads to deteriorating performance. Once noticed there are two ways action can be initiated to close the gap. First, if motivated to reach the goal, corrective actions to move your actual state closer to the intended goal can be implemented. Conversely, the team can allow pressures and present gap to remain (e.g. people griping about the lack of time or that there is too much effort involved) which will lower the goal over time. In this case, your perception that there is a gap diminishes, making the need to take actions to correct the disconnect recedes. No further action takes place. The end result is that the team has lowered their standards to close the gap between the actual and desired performance.



Commonly used words or early warning symptoms: We have no time for visions – we need to get on with the current reality – lower the vision!

Tips to note when using: What is the thinking?
"Our current level of activity is acceptable, even though it is below standard."

Managing the intervention: Various pressures can often take our attention away from what we are trying to achieve. Used as a diagnostic tool, it can target drifting performance areas and help organizations obtain their visions.

Intervention

1. Look for drifting performance figures. This is a sign that this problem exists and that real corrective actions are not being taken.
2. Look for goals that conflict with the stated goal
3. Identify ways to close the gap and incorporate them into your ground rules.
4. What actions are the team doing that is inadvertently contributing to the goal slippage?
5. Examine the past history of the goal.
6. Have these been lowered over time?
7. Anchor the goal to an external reference.
8. Clarify a compelling vision that will involve everyone
9. Create a clear transition plan. Establish what it will take to achieve the vision and establish a realistic timeline.

Discuss what the end result looks like if the system was working well:

"We know where we are going and what it will take to get there. “We monitor, evaluate and adjust performance standards in order to achieve our goal.

Real Life Examples

1. Gradually replacing high-quality ingredients with lower quality (and lower cost) substitutes—corn syrup for sugar, shortening for butter, artificial flavorings instead of real ingredients— has expedient ways of reducing cost, and thus reducing the gap between actual profits and desired profits, instead of (a) finding more cost-effective ways of obtaining or producing those ingredients or (b) investing in more sophisticated marketing of the product so that the product can justify a higher price to cover the increased costs.

2. Repeatedly “rebaselining” a program’s cost and schedule to be more expensive and longer because the initial estimates (on which the government approved the investment in the program in the first place) are seen to be unachievable as the program progresses.

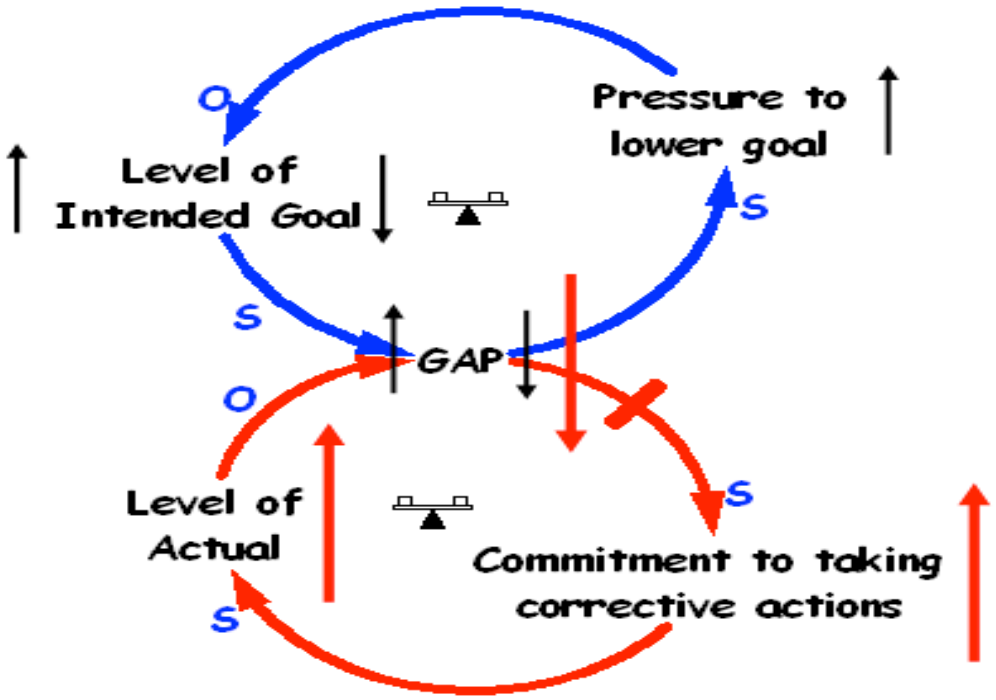
3. Reducing pollution targets when reduction implementation costs are too high

4. Increasing budget deficit limits rather than decreasing spending (or increasing taxes)

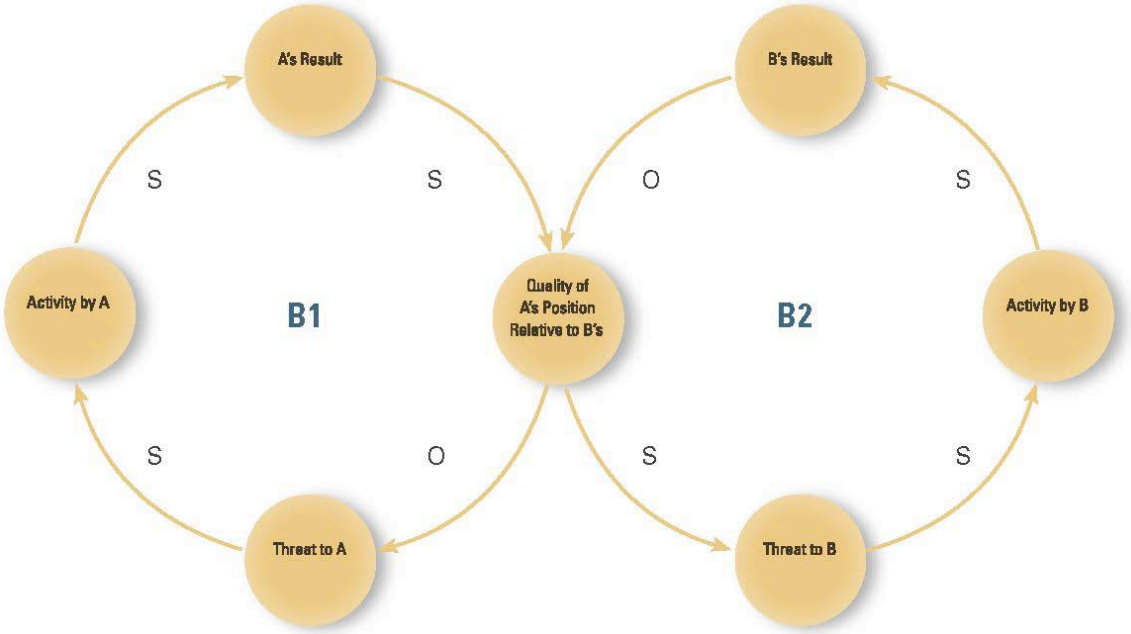
5. Adapting to unacceptable social circumstances rather than leave that environment

6. Reducing entrance requirements because not enough applicants meet them

7. Lowering your own expectations in life, leading to lower personal success



Discussion: **"Escalation"** is the system that allows the team to take their results, no matter whether they are viewed as negative or positive and reframe then into an system that produce better understanding of themselves and the project allowing the team to work more productively. Each party sees the other's actions as a risk and responds in a way that pressures the other. This problem tends to trigger when two or more persons come together and each perceives one's "survival" (grade) as depending on one's position (or success) relative to the other. Anytime this position is "upset" where one person distrust the other, there is a reaction. There is a choice between two actions; to take flight (which often may not be viable) or to fight. The latter is the more appropriate thing to do otherwise we risk "losing face". Therefore we take actions that lead us to create results that allow our positions to even or better the other. However, the other now perceives your position as an intimidation and enters into a similar cycle of actions so as to better their position.



Commonly used words or early warning symptoms: There is no end in sight! When we are "in it" we are the last persons to see "it" ourselves!

Tips to note when using: The methods used to maintain stability (balancing) tend to reinforce even greater instability.

What is the thinking? "We are on the offensive and we need to take action to defend ourselves."

Managing the intervention: MANAGING COMPETITION - One of the reasons we get caught in escalation dynamics may stem from our view of competition.

Intervention: To break an escalation structure ask the following questions:

1. What is the relative measure (price, quality, etc.) that pits one party against the other, and can you change it?
2. What are the significant delays in the system that may distort the true nature of the risk? Quantify them.
3. What are the deep-rooted assumptions that lie beneath the actions taken in response to the risk?
4. Name the key players caught in the dynamic
5. Map what you perceive as a risk.
    a. Are your actions addressing the real risk or simply serving preserving values that may no longer be relevant?
    b. Identify a larger goal encompassing both parties' goals.
6. Avoid future "Escalation" traps by creating a system of collaborative competition.

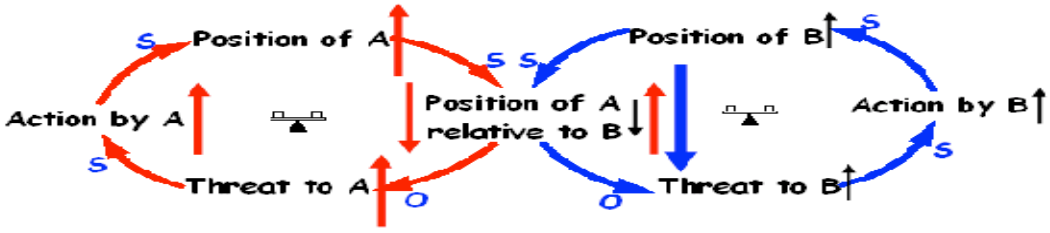
What it looks like if the system was working well:

"There is always a way for us to work this out together"
We work together and communicate openly for our collective success.

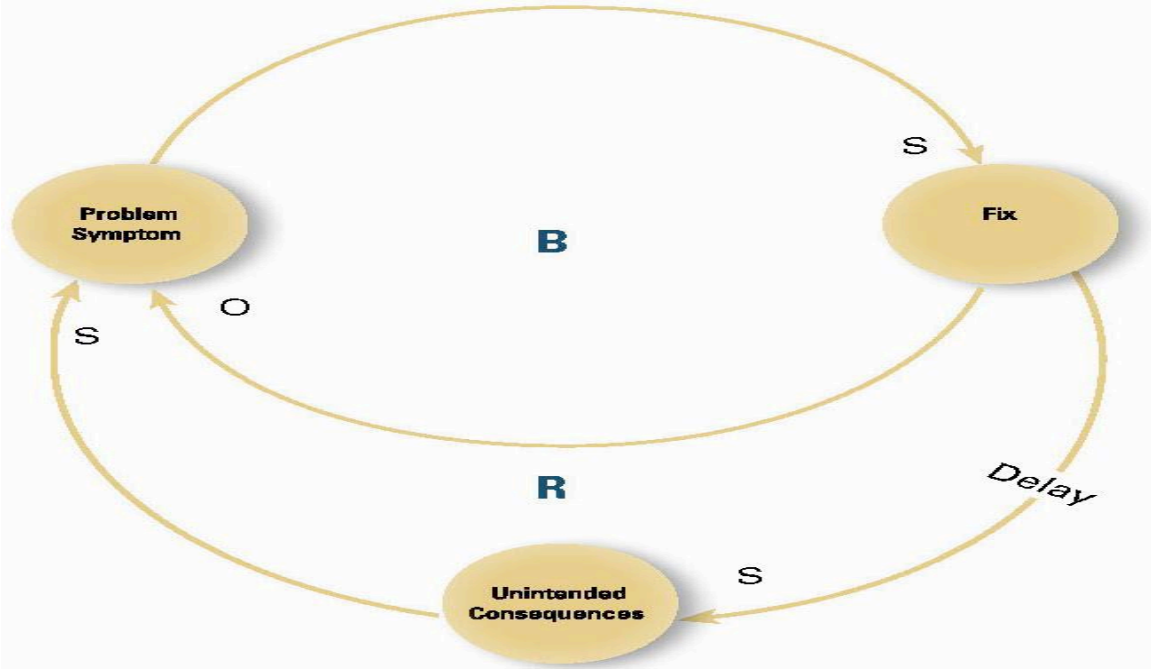
Real Life Examples:

1. The nuclear arms race, in which one country's efforts to surpass another's nuclear arsenal, simply spurs the other on to greater efforts to increase its *own* stockpile.

2. A price war between two similar businesses, where the efforts of one business to undercut the prices of the other and gain market share lead the other business to respond in kind.



Discussion: **"Fixes that Fail"** are when decisions are made by the team or an outsider that disrupt the flow of the project and changes that need to be made in the underlying ground rule system are not discussed and changed. A fix in the short-term makes the problem disappear but in the long-run creates unintended consequences that makes the problem worse, requiring more use of the same fix. As problems grow, fixes grow that are usually actions that might have worked in the past and hopefully will diminish the problem. Initially, it appears the problem gets better or the impact is reduced. But after some time, which is the time needed for the effect of one variable on another now creates an unintended consequence that makes the problem worse. Often these delays are either unrecognized or not well understood, creating a steadily worsening situation where the initial symptoms are worsened by the fix that is applied.



Behavior over time: The problem keeps coming back, worsening each time.

Commonly used words or early warning symptoms: "It always seemed to work before; why isn't it working now?"

Tips to note when using: Something about the way we are fixing it, is making it worse?

What is the thinking? "Time is money", and neither time nor money should be wasted. Therefore, the first answer must be the right one.

Managing the intervention: Almost any decision carries long-term and short-term consequences and the two are often diametrically opposed. Managing these circumstances can help us get off the problem-making treadmill by identifying fixes that may be doing more harm than good. Maintain focus on the long-term. Disregard short-term "fix", if feasible, or use it only to "buy time" while working on long-term remedy.

Intervention:

1. Turning this cycle around usually requires acknowledging that the fix is merely alleviating a symptom and making a commitment to solve the real problem.
2. A two-pronged attack of applying the fix and working out a longer-term solution will help ensure that you don't get caught in a perpetual cycle of solving yesterday's solutions:
   a. Prong #1: Identify what is causing the problem (the causes). Map current interventions and how they were expected to rectify the problem. Map unintended consequences of the interventions

b. Prong #2: Notice in mapping the unintended consequences, the longer term causality that reinforces (causes) the problem. Find connections between fixes and the causes. Are they linked? Proceed to identify leverage interventions. Map potential side-effects (e.g. the unwillingness to 'bite the bullet' and wait it out) for each intervention in order to be prepared for them (or to avoid them altogether)

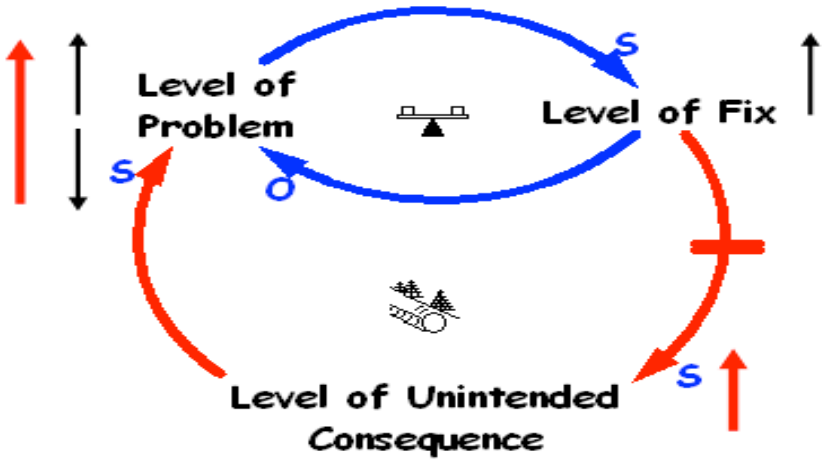
What it looks like if the system was working well:

"We consider possible alternative and their side-effects before acting."
We identify possible side effects of short-term fixes.

Real Life Examples:

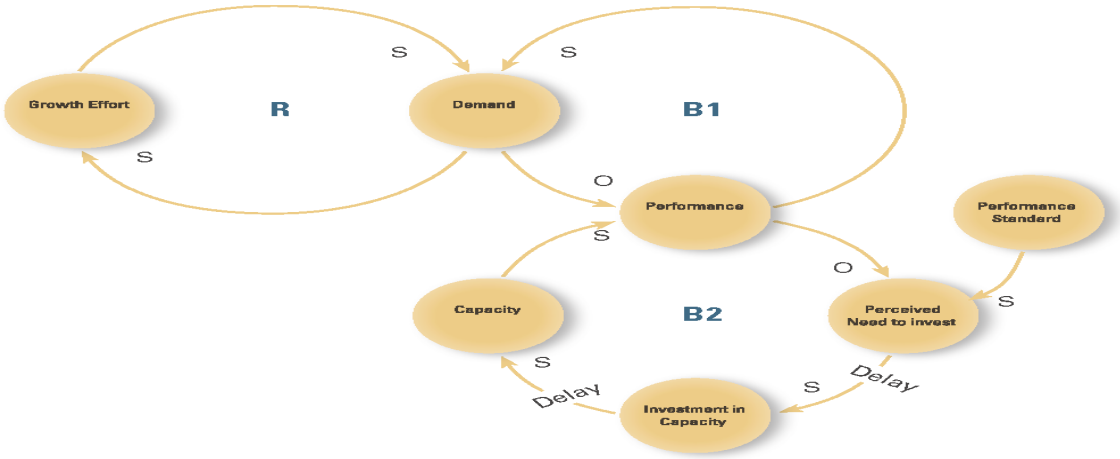
1. Using a credit card to pay off debt, which temporarily alleviates the problem, but then worsens the total debt through additional interest from finance charges.

2. Increasing hiring to augment existing experienced staff, but then finding that the experienced staff's time is largely consumed by bringing the new hires up to speed, resulting in a sharp loss in productivity



Discussion- **"Growth of Time Investment"** is when the project as initially structured is changed because of changes to the project, such as deadlines changed or after the project is underway the team realizes that more time investment is needed to complete the project successfully. Ground rules may need to be reorganized. A gap in understanding is occurring. When this gap occurs frustration mounts, the team needs to discuss and take action to reduce anxiety and develop a better understanding on how to move forward. The gap is the lack of understanding between a goal and reality. If not discussed a team will often lower the goal to close the gap. Eventually, the lowering of the goal leads to deteriorating performance. Once noticed there are two ways action can be initiated to close the gap. First, if motivated to reach the goal, corrective actions

to move your actual state closer to the intended goal can be implemented. Conversely, the team can allow pressures and present gap to remain (e.g. people griping about the lack of time or that there is too much effort involved) which will lower the goal over time. In this case, your perception that there is a gap diminishes, making the need to take actions to correct the disconnect recedes. No further action takes place. The end result is that the team has lowered their standards to close the gap between the actual and desired performance. A reinforcing process is set in motion to produce a desired result. It creates a spiral of success but also creates inadvertent secondary effects (manifested in a balancing process) that eventually slow down the success. The team does not realize that all anticipated performance measures would eventually run up against constraints and impediments. Performance grows, then plateaus, then slows down and grows again. Formation is a growth period while criticism is a plateau, then synthesis is a slowing down to accommodate changes needed to begin growth in performance again to accomplishment.



Commonly used words or early warning symptoms: We have no time for visions – we need to get on with the current reality – lower the vision!

Tips to note when using: What is the thinking?
"Our current level of activity is acceptable, even though it is below standard."

Managing the intervention: Various pressures can often take our attention away from what we are trying to achieve. Used as a diagnostic tool, it can target limited performance areas and help organizations obtain their visions. Don't push growth or success; remove the factors limiting growth.

Intervention

1. Look for unmanaged performance results. This is a sign that this problem exists and that real corrective actions are not being taken. State impediments to the team's performance.
2. Look for goals that conflict with the stated goal

3. Don't push against the slowing growth, adapt and change the systems to accommodate new performance measures. The more you push, the more out of balance the team's performance becomes.
3. Identify ways to close the gap and incorporate them into your ground rules. Change the limiting factors in the performance. Remove the bottleneck. Example: Always late in submitting work. Discuss what is preventing the performance rather than state will do better next time.
4. What actions are the team doing that is inadvertently contributing to the goal slippage?
5. Examine the past history of the goal.
6. Have these been lowered over time? Anchor the goal to an external reference.
7. Clarify a compelling vision that will involve everyone
8. Create a clear transition plan. Establish what it will take to achieve the vision and establish a realistic timeline.

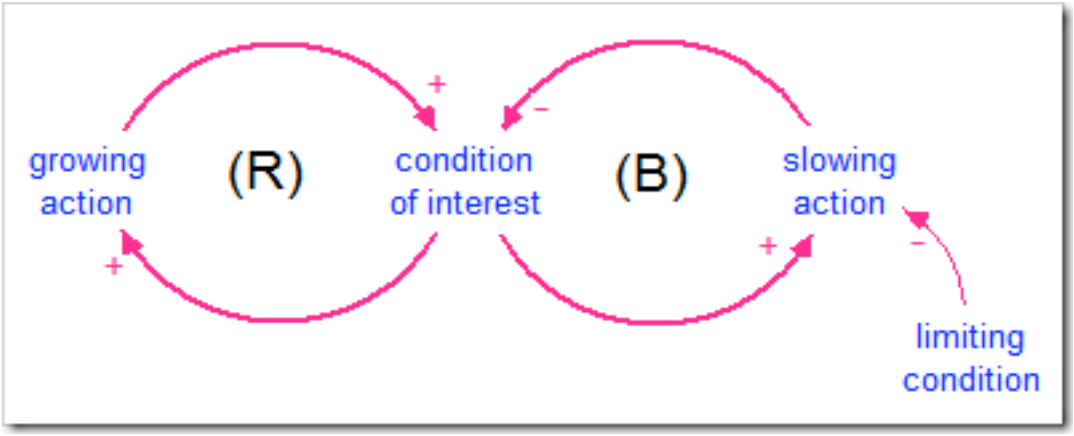
Discuss what the end result looks like if the system was working well:

"We know where we are going and what it will take to get there." We monitor, evaluate and adjust performance standards in order to achieve our goals.

Real Life Examples

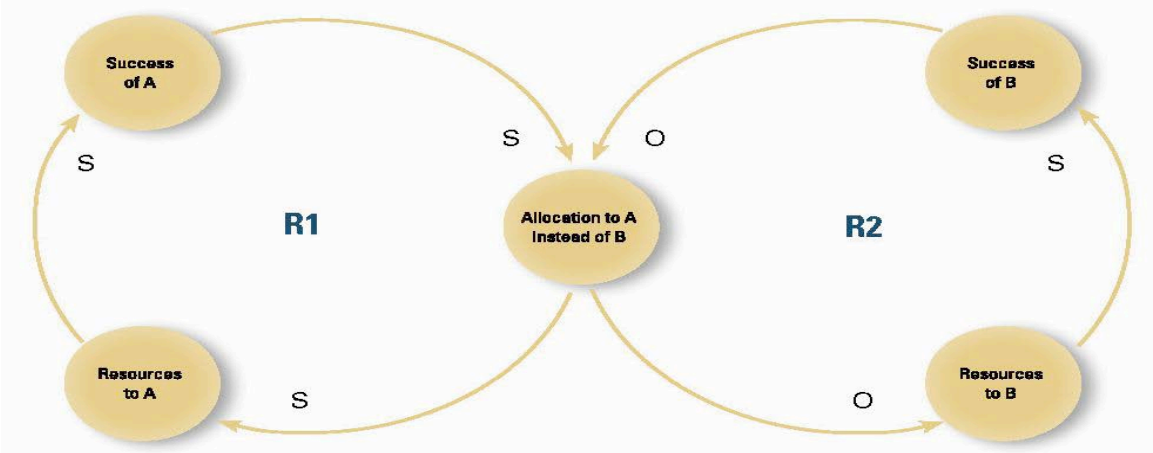
1. The demise of People's Express airline is widely believed to be due to a failure to grow the customer service function so that it would be able to keep pace with the growth of the rest of the airline.

2. Trying to learn to play the piano without a teacher saves money in the short run by underinvestment, but the desired proficiency is never achieved, leading to unfulfilled expectations, disillusionment with interest in practicing gradually fades.



Condition of Interest is Performance of the team or its individual members.

Discussion - **"Limits to Success"** is when the team realizes that their initial model of success needs changes due to outside or inside pressures and limits. Many sudden and well-intentioned efforts for improvement bump up against limits to growth. A reinforcing (amplifying) process is set in motion to produce a desired result. It creates a spiral of success but also creates inadvertent secondary effects, manifested in a balancing process that stabilizes and which operates to limit the growth, eventually slowing down the success and even coming to a standstill. As we put in effort we see results. And as such we put in greater efforts leading to a spiral of successes and this provides the structure with the initial momentum. However after some time, the more effort we put in, the less results we obtain. As we build efforts, especially in sudden, though well-intentioned efforts, these begin to create a limit or a constraint (poor data analysis due to lack of time) in some other part of the system, often a part that is hidden or not as visible to the part of the system that is generating the efforts and the result. The greater the effort we put in, the greater the constraint becomes. The limit or the constraint now begins to create an action that limits the level of results (members need to focus on other courses). When we notice that growth is declining because we can see that there are still results, except not by as much as before we are likely to push for even more efforts because that is how we got results in the first place. Unfortunately these actions lead to greater levels of constraints building up within the system. The limiting actions also continue to grow and begin to adversely affect results downwards, until 'it pushes' results go all the way down (inaccurate data analysis), by which time the reinforcing loop begins to behave negatively, in which case the limiting action disappears too and all growths come to a standstill.



Behavior: Over time increases

Commonly used words or early warning symptoms: Whatever we tried to do, we are not getting the successes we used to get. Somebody is not doing their job well. It feels like a pressure-cooker here. Success or growth is leveling off or declining.

Tips to note when using: Don't push for growth; remove the factors limiting growth.

What is the thinking? "We'll get bigger and better results by continuing to do more of what we are doing now."

Managing the intervention: If we don't plan for limits we are planning for failure. By mapping out the growth engines and potential danger points in advance, we can anticipate future problems and eliminate them

Intervention: Limiting Success is most helpful when it is used ahead of any problems, to see how the cumulative effects of continued success might lead to future problems Explore questions such as "What kinds of pressures are building up in the project as a result of obtaining so much data?" Look for ways to relieve pressures or remove limits before success blows over – may need to consider slowing down the activities to give resources long enough to overcome the limits

What it looks like if the system was working well: "We can overcome limits by planning for them." **"**We identify, evaluate and plan for limits."

Real Life Examples

1. Incoming students who have high-standardized test scores (e.g., intelligence) may get more attention from instructors, providing these students with greater incentives to work hard and excel in subsequent standardized tests.

2. The collapse of the deer population on the Kaibab plateau and on St. Matthew Island due to overpopulation and the overgrazing of their habitat.

3. The overshoot and collapse of the human population on Easter Island

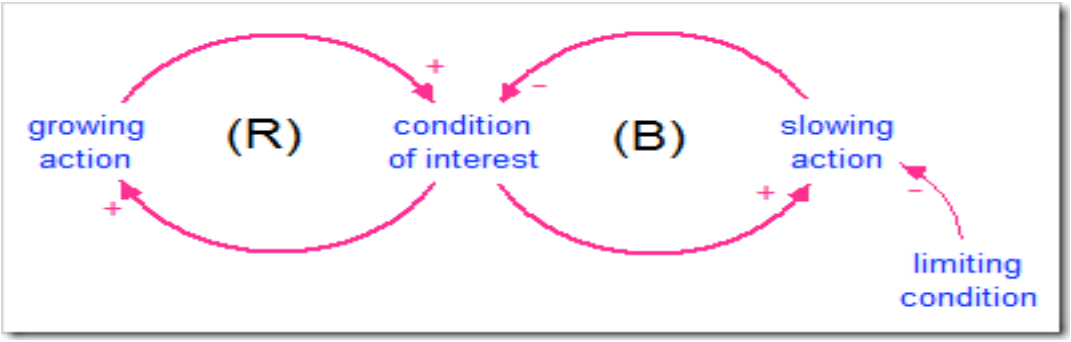
4. Overgrazing in the Sahel region of Africa by cattle herders

5. Overfishing of the oceans by fishermen

6. The contraction of the world economy in 2008 due to limiting oil supplies

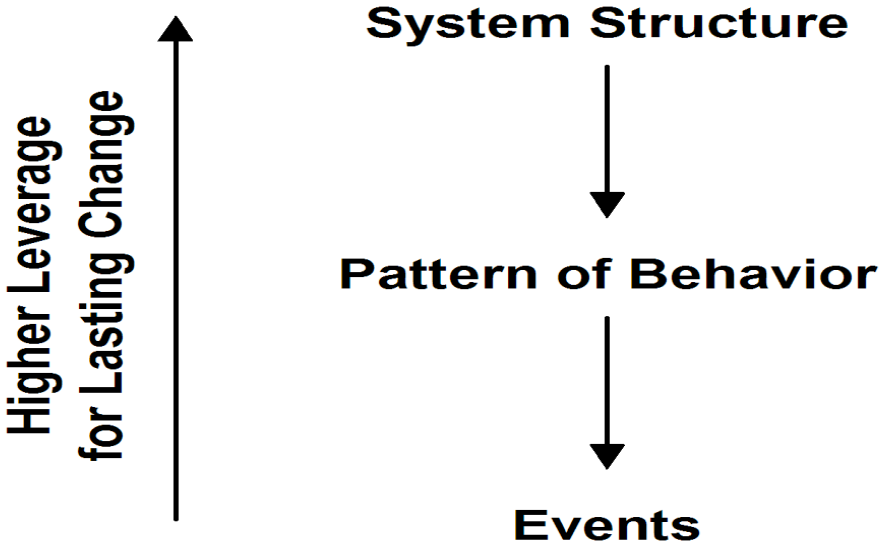
7. The productivity of staff deteriorating as a company grows, due to increased interactions and reporting overhead

8. Yeast cells in the fermentation process, who suffer from both the loss of exogenously supplied sugar and the increase of endogenously produced pollution



Systems Thinking

The need to change our thinking lies in the distinction between first- and second-order changes. First-order change calls for doing more of the same to address an issue. Increasing the application of the current remedy. Second-order change calls for making a change to the structure of the system that is creating the issue. Second-order change requires acknowledging that the current remedy is no longer working and stepping back from the situation to reassess options; this often results in trying a different approach altogether. Systems thinking techniques support this change in perspective and provide both insight and guidance when applied to our most complex issues. As we shall see in this problem solving session, attempts at first-order change that are conducted within the existing structure often exacerbate rather than resolve the issue they were intended to address.



Systems Archetypes

The systems archetypes each describe a generic story, a scenario that plays out in many different situations and environments, but always follows the same underlying pattern. Despite the prevalence of these storylines, there is still some surprise on the part of those who are swept up in the dynamics of each of the systems archetypes—a feeling

of, “There I was, just doing my job like I always have, when out of the blue, through no fault of my own, I got sideswiped by *this*— and now I don’t know how to get out.” Usually, this is the result of the “side-effect” or the “unintended consequence” of the archetype. Resolving these patterns, once they’re set in motion, can’t be accomplished by doing more of the same thing that has been done before. Just as “doing what you always do” can set an archetype in motion, it often requires doing something counterintuitive or unexpected to break the pattern—because the archetypes do not resolve themselves.

Learning Objectives:

1. Develop an awareness of what problems teams encounter
2. Ability to create solutions to solve some of team problems.
3. Learn to employ Principled Negotiation
4. Revisit ground rules to adjust systems to meet individual team needs
5. Enhance the team’s ability to problem solve

Principled Negotiation:

PRINCIPLE #1 - Separate the people from the problem
Learn to separate people difficulties from substantive issues. "Be soft on the people and hard on the problem. “Use psychological tools to handle psychological difficulties; analytical tools to address substantive issues.

PRINCIPLE #2 - Focus on interests, not positions
Positional bargaining causes people to "dig in their heels” and maintain their position to avoid losing face. Learn to look behind positions for interests, some of which you may share.

PRINCIPLE #3 - Invent options for mutual gain
Work with your partner to create additional options to explore. Use brainstorming techniques to create a larger number of quality ideas to serve your common interests.

PRINCIPLE #4 - Insist on objective criteria
Appeal to objective standards and outside sources to judge the quality of your agreements. This not only helps "separate the people from the problem”, but also allows negotiators to work together to identify possible measures of fairness. **(Fisher, R., Ury, W. & Patton, B., 1991)**

“BATNA” - Best Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement: (from Roger Fisher, William Ury and Bruce Patton, Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In) an acronym for Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement is the alternative action that can be taken if a proposed agreement with another party will result in an unsatisfactory agreement or when an agreement fails to materialize. When the potential results of a current negotiation only offers a value that is less than the BATNA, then negotiations can cease and the BATNA should be implemented. When using a

BATNA, prior to the start of negotiations, each party should determine their own individual BATNA (www.negotiations.com). A BATNA is not a bottom line but an alternative.

Glossary of Terms

SYSTEMS THINKING - The world is not separate unrelated forces. Because individuals have difficulty seeing a pattern in its entirety, a conceptual framework called System Thinking with a body of knowledge and tools has been developed over the past fifty years to clearly explain a team's patterns. This concept is used to help teams change to more effective patterns of communication, collaboration, and negotiation with the least amount of effort in finding solutions to problems within the team's operating systems.

LEARNING TEAMS - are teams where members continually expand their knowledge to create a collaborative environment nurturing new and expansive thinking patterns, contemplating collective aspiration, and exercise collaborative learning.

MENTAL MODELS - are deeply ingrained assumptions, imagery, and generalizations that influence how we create understanding of our environment. Utilizing mental models begins with looking inward and learning to acknowledge our internal concepts and scrutinize them in a collaborative environment.

BUILDING SHARED VISION - are the skills of unearthing shared "pictures of the future" that foster genuine commitment and enrollment, rather than compliance.

TEAM LEARNING – is creating a dialogue, the capacity of members of a team to suspend assumptions and enter into a genuine collaboration. Rather than literally heaving ideas back and forth in a winner-takes-all competition that happens frequently in brainstorming, team learning is vital because all members understand that dialogue is just the beginning of a conversation.

STRUCTURE INFLUENCES BEHAVIOR – conveys the concept that systems cause their own crises, not external forces or individuals' mistakes. In Team Ground Rule Systems, structure includes how people make decisions through translating perceptions, goals, rules, and norms into actions. Structure produces behavior, and changing underlying structures can produce different patterns of behavior. In this sense, structural explanations are inherently *generative.* For example, when decision makers redesign their own way of making decisions this in of itself redesigns the structure of the ground rule system.

References **(Documents used to adapt the exercise)**

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