Systems Thinking for Business Analysts: Understanding ‘Messy’ Problems

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**Course Description**
Many organisational initiatives focus on solving tricky and ‘messy’ organisational problems, involving many stakeholders, departments, systems and processes. Yet, so often our stakeholders are blindsided by sickly-sweet silver-bullet solutions that seem so simple and assume a neat linear relationship between cause and effect. The trouble is that things are rarely that simple, and in trying to navigate the organisational ‘spaghetti’, so often we find it hard to get beyond short-term firefighting. Sound familiar? Then this course is for you!

**Why Attend**
In this practical and hands-on one day course, you will hear about the importance of systems thinking in a business analysis context and will have the opportunity to practise using a range of tools that can be used to systemically analyse a problem situation. The course contains a wide range of exercises which are used to ensure that the learning translates to real-world scenarios. It is suitable for beginners who have little or no formal knowledge of systems thinking techniques, and can act as a useful refresher for those who have some existing experience. It is of particular relevance to those that work early in the business change lifecycle, before a project is initiated.
Learning Outcomes
Attendees who successfully attend the course will:

- Understand the danger of ‘silver-bullet’ solutions that are pursued without sufficient analysis.
- Understand what ‘systems thinking’ is, why it is important for business analysis and projects, and the consequences of applying linear/siloed thinking.
- Be able to differentiate between ‘difficulties’ and ‘messes’, and use this differentiation to select appropriate problem solving tools for a given context.
- Be familiar with a technique for examining the external business environment.
- Be familiar with a range of relevant tools and techniques:
  - Rich Pictures
  - Multiple Cause Diagrams
  - Causal Loops

Course Content

1. Introduction

The nature of an interconnected world, definition of a ‘system’ and an introduction to systems thinking and practice and its relevance to business analysis

2. Assess Context

Introduction to techniques and concepts that are useful when initially considering a problematic situation, including:

- A tool for assessing the complexity of a situation in order to assess what types of approaches will be relevant
- The traps of linear thinking
3. Assess Perspectives, Purpose and Boundaries

A range of systems techniques and concepts including techniques for:
- Assessing different perspectives
- Understanding how different stakeholders evaluate ‘success’.
- Understanding how different ‘boundary judgements’ can affect how stakeholders see a situation
- Conducting external environment analysis

4. Analyse Problem Situation

Overview of a range of systems techniques and concepts including:
- Rich Picture
- Multiple Cause Diagram
- Feedback & Causal Loops

5. Propose Action

This section focusses on taking the insight gained through the other systems techniques and diagrams to determine where change may be feasible and desirable, and the types of actions that can follow.
**Audience**
This course is well suited for anyone needing to understand how to analyse tricky problems early in the business change lifecycle. It will be of particular interest to BA teams that are seeking early business engagement, or those that are working with multiple stakeholder groups.

This is likely to include:

- Business Analysts
- Consultants
- Requirements Engineers
- Business Systems Analysts
- Product Owners
- Requirements Managers

**Inclusive Material:**
Each delegate receives a printed copy of the *Blackmetric Course Manual* which contains a concise summary of the course.

**Next Steps:**
To find out more, and to book the course for your team, please contact us:

Tel: (023) 9298 4546

Email: info@blackmetric.co.uk

Web: www.blackmetric.co.uk