

# Institute of Systems Wisdom



Pioneers in Translational Consulting

## *Fellows Newsletter*

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### INSTITUTE MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

We welcome several new **Fellows** to the Institute which has brought the total to more than 50. The **Fellows** website page (<http://www.systemswisdom.com/institute-systems-wisdom>) lists names as we complete documentation. **Fellows** are encouraged to recommend to the *Newsletter Editor* the names of others who may be invited to join our community.

### SYSTEMS WISDOM & INSTITUTE ACTIVITIES

#### New Systems Wisdom Office

We are pleased to report that **Samuel Lim, Research and Consulting Associate** and a Penn doctoral student is opening a branch of Systems Wisdom in Singapore. Sam has been meeting with local business communities and has enabled presentation of some of our services to local leadership groups. In addition to Singapore, our international services are available in São Paulo, Toronto, London, and Sydney.

#### Strategic Alliances

Systems Wisdom has strategic agreements with eight organizations two of which were recently completed. Our newest alliances are with **The Leadership Alliance** and **DAVPHD**. Information

about each is presented below. A link to all alliance groups is here:

<http://www.systemswisdom.com/about-us>



[The Leadership Alliance Inc. \(TLA\)](#) was founded in Canada in 1987 based on a collaborative network of uniquely skilled international authorities (TLA Associates). TLA Associates are committed to supporting one another and to helping clients achieve responsible business and organizational solutions in collaborative and developmental partnership with stakeholder communities. For information, contact CEO and president, Peter A.C. Smith.



**DAVPHD** (<http://www.davphd.com/>) is the executive coaching practice of Dominick Volini, Ph.D. Based in the New York City area, Dominick coaches individuals on leadership skills, teamwork and behavioral issues which may be part of a large organizational effort (e.g., merger, new business strategy, business start-up) or focused on one individual's needs. His approach is shaped by his career-long belief in Whole Systems thinking which promotes increased awareness and communication including to "be open" to feedback, to input about one's projects, to what is said and not said by colleagues, to new opportunities and to different points of view. The simplicity of this approach replaces popular "step approaches," is easy to remember and very effective. There is almost no one who cannot benefit by improving awareness and increasing communications. For information, contact [Dr. Dominick Volini \(link sends e-mail\)](#).

## Presentations and Workshops

### International Institute for Learning



As an associate partner of Australia-based **ICCPM** and **ICCPM North America** (<https://iccpm.com/content/iccpm-north-america>), Systems Wisdom has been invited to be a presenter at the International Institute for Learning's **International Project Management Day 2014**. Here are two brief *You Tube* promotions for this event

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fkHDxxnxOPw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PE3UdyvCg4o>

Here is a brief a “teaser” from one of the speakers: <http://youtu.be/d3VvKrMYr5k>

### In2Thinking Network



InThinking Network

Strategic Alliance partner, **In2Thinking Network**, has invited Systems Wisdom to present an *Ongoing Discussion Conference Call* to their global Network on October 30 (repeated October 31) from 12-1pm and 1-2pm Pacific Time. The title is, "Activating the Generative Organizational Learning Funnel" which is the underlying model for Systems Wisdom's educational and research approach.

Read their September *Newsletter* and scroll down to the “Future Ongoing Discussion Calls” announcement on this link: <http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?ca=ea160a8f-b54a-4f21-9fb0-78ca71e3e642&c=cdae4be0-203e-11e3-80bf-d4ae52754055&ch=cdbfc1d0-01a8-11e4-b6c1-d4ae529a8786>



Systems Wisdom consultants **John Pourdehnad** and **Larry M. Starr** have returned from Tomsk, Siberia, Russia where they taught a workshop to more than 30 senior administrative staff and faculty at Tomsk State University. The invitation was arranged by the TSU International School of Management and the TSU International Office. Here is a link to the press release about the workshop titled, "Development of an organization's ability to operate in a complex international environment": [http://tsu.ru/english/about\\_tsu/news\\_events/52075/](http://tsu.ru/english/about_tsu/news_events/52075/).

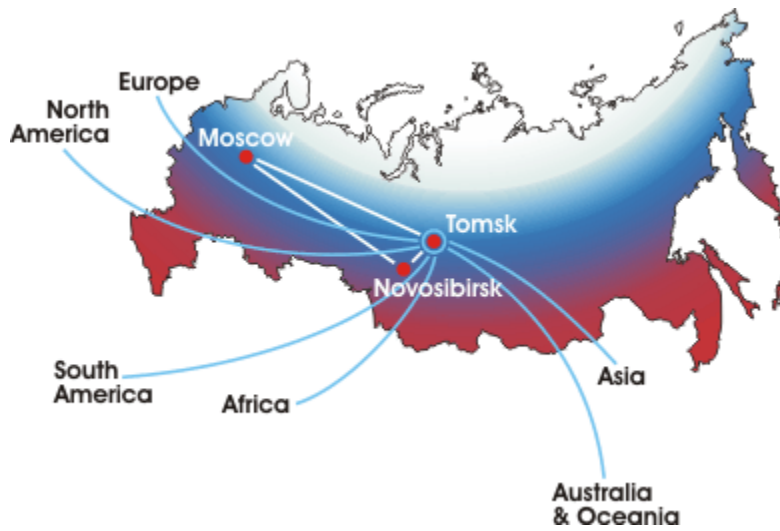
Systems Wisdom was invited because the problem of “internationalization” for TSU (or any organization) is complex which means it calls for a different way of thinking and different methodologies and tools. The workshops, therefore, established and built capacity for systems thinking as a framework and design thinking for problem solving.

Tomsk city, described by the *Moscow Times* is “a little innovation island in the middle of Russia,” with a population where “more than 20 percent are students.” The city (described on the TSU website) is:

a large educational, research and innovation center in Siberia, home to 8 universities, 11 research institutes, five business incubators, the Technical Innovation Special Economic Zone (that specializes in nanotechnologies, IT, electronics, biotechnology and medicine), as well as more than 25,000 organizations and companies, 11,700 small businesses, more than 3 thousand shopping centers and stores, more than 80 schools and grammar schools, and 60 cultural and entertainment organizations.

Here are some images from the workshop and from Tomsk:







Consultant **Larry M. Starr** is leading the design to create a new kind of professional doctorate for Philadelphia University an institution which focuses on integrated education and professional and applied studies. Here is part of what the Executive Dean for the College of Science, Health and Liberal Arts emailed to the faculty:

Dr. Larry Starr an accomplished scholar and academic leader will be reaching out to you to explore the feasibility, design and marketability of implementing a post-Masters Degree professional doctorate focused on strategic leadership. He will be inviting you to individual and/or group meetings that will range from 30-60 minutes for the individual meetings and 2-4 hours for the group meetings.

The idea of a discipline-agnostic, project-based, professional doctorate focused on strategic leadership, systems and design thinking principles, and closely tied to executive education is novel. With this in mind, our goal is to explore the idea thoroughly with an open mind, and using a transparent, inclusive process. The goal of the program is to reach working professionals with a master's degree (MBA, MPA, M. Arch., MPH, MA, MS...) who are in the stage of life where they are asking- what's next? This will give them an opportunity to interact with other professionals, advance in industry or move into higher education.

The project begins with idealized design methodology scheduled initially in 4 sessions in October and November. In addition to internal Philadelphia University faculty and staff, more than 60 external people from more than a dozen stakeholder and interest groups are participating. All **Fellows** are invited to attend as participants and some will be facilitators.

[Nationwide Investment Management Group](#)



Systems Wisdom completed a three-day workshop with Nationwide Investment Management Group the company's mutual fund business located in Pennsylvania and Ohio. The Nationwide

leadership team requested an education workshop that focused on the challenges of organizational complexity and that demonstrated how systems thinking can provide cognitive and performance tools for operating in complex environments.

## FELLOWS NEWS

**Fellow Adam Roth-Saks** was recently profiled by the University of Pennsylvania International Educational Development Master's Program (he was also a student in the *Systems and Design Thinking* course taught in Spring 2014 by **John Pourdehnad**). Here is the link to the story describing how he found simple solutions to complex problems: <http://www.gse.upenn.edu/news/gse-student-finds-simple-solutions-complex-problems-internship-abroad>. We are also pleased to report that in August, Adam received an appointment in the Penn School of Social Policy and Practice: <http://www.sp2.upenn.edu/people/view/adam-roth-saks/>.

(Editor's Note: All **Fellows** are encouraged to submit personal and professional updates and news for posting.)

## FELLOWS on FACEBOOK

**Fellows** are encouraged to join the Systems Wisdom group on *Facebook*. We use this channel to upload and present a broad variety of papers and reports about systems and design thinking, its implications and applications. During August, for example, 9 articles were posted. So far this month, 8 articles have been posted.

## FELLOWS READING

This issue of the **Fellows Newsletter** presents links to reports, scholarship and other sources of intellectual stimulation that reflect our mission to "encourage, support and exchange curiosity-driven research and ideas, and seek solutions to current challenges by applying systems and design thinking." **Fellows** are encouraged to read, discuss and offer feedback. Here are readings for 2014, Vol 1 No. 3:

### The Key to Making Tough Decisions? Courage

*Business News Daily*, by Chad Brooks, *Business News Daily* Senior Writer

Published: August 12, 2014



The best business leaders are daring enough to make tough, and oftentimes unpopular, decisions, new research finds. The most difficult part of making decisions isn't figuring out the right answer; it's having the courage to actually act on that knowledge, according to a study presented at this month's annual meeting of the Academy of Management.

When researchers asked executives about their most difficult decisions, nine out of 10 did **not identify decisions that were complex**. Instead, they **considered being willing to do the right thing to be the hardest part**. "In other words, these were decisions requiring courage in the face of some personal, political or organizational risk," the study's authors wrote.

When [making these difficult decisions](#), executives don't need advisers to question the wisdom of making the courageous choice, researchers said. "What they need is just the opposite: moral support for resolve in making the tough decision - to avoid a temptation, in Margaret Thatcher's vivid phrase, to 'go wobbly,'" the study's authors wrote.

This doesn't mean that [leaders](#) should never use input and advice from those around them when making some decisions. The researchers said executives should go through a process of gathering as much information they can when making difficult decisions, but also need to be able to switch off that process when courage is required.

The researchers found that **rather than talking with their peers and co-workers, many top executives turn to outside sources when making tough choices**. **The study found that the executives in these situations were more inclined to gather information from written sources and from outside academics**. "These kinds of sources may provide the benefits of information available to use for decisions emphasizing courage where the executive wishes to cut back on [advice] from a wide group of advisers," the study's authors wrote.

Read more here: <http://aom.org/News/AOM-in-the-News/The-Key-to-Making-Tough-Decisions--Courage.aspx>

## Systems and Psychoanalysis: Contemporary Integrations in Family Therapy

Author(s): Carmel Flaskas, and David Pocock

This intellectually rigorous and generative collection of papers, positioned at the intersection of systemic and psychoanalytic therapy, captures the potential synergy of bringing these two honoured traditions back into dialogue, on new terms. The editors do partisans of both fields a great service in this effort, since their long-standing mutual isolation has kept each dismissive of the other, and ignorant of developments in the other's field - to their mutual detriment. The book tracks the ways in which innovative systemic practitioners are creatively reassembling the clinical and intellectual lineaments of psychodynamic and systems thinking in their work. **While the strategies are many and varied, the collection as a whole reflects some of the deepest**



**ideals and practices of both traditions at their best: holding complexity, tolerating contradiction, seeking common ground, seeing past limiting and ideologically driven binaries, thinking and working outside the box, and honouring history and tradition, even while digging it up.'**

Read more here: <http://www.karnacbooks.com/Product.asp?PID=26221>

## Strategy versus Design Thinking

### Underthinking is as just bad as Overthinking

Kingshuk Das, from Fall 2014 edition of *Rotman Management Magazine*, published by the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management.

Organizations looking to grow often find themselves caught between conventional and newer approaches to innovation. While traditional strategy calls for rigorous analysis and critical thinking, design thinking espouses 'thinking by doing'. The key is to find the sweet spot between the two approaches.

One of the worst habits associated with traditional strategy, especially in large corporations, is *overthinking* — aka 'death by analysis'. An obsession with minimizing risk leads to the inability to make decisions fast enough to respond to disruptions. In strategy work, this shows up in fruitless attempts to quantify the unquantifiable and to predict the unpredictable.

In many ways, design thinking is intended as an antidote to death by analysis. With its bias towards making, iterating and real-world learning, it often succeeds in unlocking innovation. The payoff of this approach lies in the excitement of doing things we haven't tried before, and the emotional high that comes from breaking out of a deliberative state to take action. The first experience of design thinking thus feels energizing and liberating to organizations used to bureaucratic processes...

Read more here:

<https://medium.com/@kingshukdas/strategy-versus-design-thinking-41d86ad81f1f>