

work at the beginning and there is very little to show for it. However, once success begins to sprout, your work is far from finished. Your work will change depending on what grows, what bugs get into the system, what weeds come up, the environment.

To succeed in the information age takes a new perspective - that growth and success both require change and continued growth requires continued change.

Listen to your plants. They will tell you what they need.

Look at the WHOLE

Joe wanted to have a body like Charles Atlas. He spent all his time developing the muscles in his left leg. “You see,” he proudly said, “I’ll get this leg pumped. Then I’ll start on the other leg and so on, until my body is great.” It didn’t work out that way. His left leg became so strong, it overpowered his right and he could only walk in circles.

How often do you look at a piece of an organization and try to fix the problems you see? It seems right. **However, you must take a step back and consider how a change in one part will affect the whole.**

Remember my visit to the motor vehicles department? When you get to the motor vehicles office, you get in a line that leads to windows that give information and forms and a number to get to the “we can do something” windows. Then you wait for your number to be called.

Whenever the line got too long, people from the back would come and staff the windows so that the line would get shorter.

The problem was that **no one was also increasing staffing at the “we can do something” windows.** While the line stayed short, people weren’t served any faster and the room stayed overcrowded. **Fixing one part without considering**

the others often renders your improvements moot.

Indeed, it can cause performance to decline.

J. Robert Carleton writes of a project at a bank where the original call was for customer service training for a specific task. **He took the time to watch the work of the customer service people** at several branches and at other bank's branches. He identified several problems, including signage and equipment that contributed to reduced productivity. **He did this by looking at the entire enterprise, not just focusing on the problem he was originally asked to solve.**

Eason talks of looking at all the people and parts that will be affected by a new system, including customers and suppliers. **If a group is processing faster, but the information they are processing doesn't also increase, there will be no improvement.**

Peter Senge's 5th Discipline is systems thinking. Take the time to read through Senge's work. It provides a good grounding in a new way of analyzing situations and problems.

Many of the things we have talked about (like DOPSS) are focused on supporting small groups. That is where most of the

innovation and learning will happen in an information age organization. **Success in huge companies depends on the work in small groups.**

In looking at sharing information and building group knowledge, we must not forget that these groups are part of a greater whole, which can support or hinder the work of the groups.

We need to **pay attention to the boundaries of these groups and encourage people to cross boundaries**, sharing what they have learned with others.

In this undertaking, the information librarians or gardeners again have an important role. **They are the ultimate boundary crossers, bringing knowledge about groups to other groups.**

We can learn the whole only from looking at the parts within the whole.

The strength of the organization is the strength of all of the parts and how they strengthen each other. Alexander's Nature of Order is a masterpiece that guides you through the discovery of this new view.