

## Systems Thinking and Beyond for Project Managers

Written by: Dr. Joseph E Kasser, CM | January 12, 2016



How do you go about gaining an understanding of a problematic situation? Do you do it systemically and systematically, or do you use an ad hoc approach? Gaining an understanding of the situation is the most important aspect of problem-solving. This is because if you fail to identify the correct problem, you will end up providing a solution to the wrong problem. And, systems thinking is the most important aspect of gaining an understanding of the situation.



If you look up several sources of systems thinking, you will find that the literature on systems engineering is incomplete, confusing, and contradictory. The literature mostly provides statements of the benefits of systems thinking and tells you what needs to be done, but generally fails to provide practical advice on how to actually perform systems thinking

to solve a problem. After years of research and development, I've built on the work of Barry Richmond (Richmond, 1993) to develop and test a way to teach students how to use systems thinking and produce positive results. I have created a short video on 'systems thinking and beyond for project managers' which summarizes material from my classes. This video can be found at <https://youtu.be/MzPEztyPVgo> (and below) and includes a mixture of theoretical knowledge and useful tools. The video: **1. Explains systems thinking. 2. Shows:**

- **The benefits of systems thinking.**
- **There are different incomplete versions of systems thinking in the literature.**
- **Where systems thinking is appropriate.**
- **Why you have to go beyond systems thinking to solve problems.**

### **3. Provides a useful thinking tool for performing systems thinking.**

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<em>Systems thinking: critical thinking skills for the 1990s and beyond</em>, System
Dynamics Review 9 (1993), no. 2, 113-133.</span></p> <p>&nbsp;</p> <p>&nbsp;</p>
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## **About the Author**



### **Dr. Joseph E Kasser, CM**

Dr. Joseph Kasser was a practising systems engineer and manager for 30 years before joining academia. He is a recipient of NASA's Manned Space Flight Awareness Award (Silver Snoopy) for quality and technical excellence for performing and directing systems engineering and many other awards and commendations. He is an INCOSE Fellow, holds a Doctor of Science in Engineering Management from The George Washington University, and is both a Chartered Engineer and a Certified

Manager. He is currently a Visiting Associate Professor at the National University of Singapore. His previous academic positions include being a Leverhulme Visiting Professor at Cranfield University, England and the Deputy Director and an Associate Research Professor at the Systems Engineering and Evaluation Centre in the University of South Australia.

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