The Fifth Discipline, The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization by Peter M. Senge offers some useful insights into "systems thinking," the fifth discipline. I am going to use Peter’s five disciplines for the topics of my next few monthly messages.

Peter Senge asks the question: Does your organization have a learning disability? One illustration is particularly profound for those of you who have taken Covey’s Seven Habits course which I highly recommend. The important qualifier to Covey’s "Be Proactive" is to have a system perspective. Senge’s point is that proactiveness is often reactiveness. First, you must understand the structure of the process you are working with. The TxDOT research process would be an example where understanding the whole process will lead to better projects than focusing in on a particular detail, such as just writing winning proposals.

Take the case of writing TxDOT proposals. Are you being proactive or reactive when you promise more than you can reasonably deliver for the time and funding available? A system perspective to being proactive would be to have spent time prior to the development of the proposal working with the project director to understand his or her needs, so that you only propose what is essential from the PD’s perspective. Better yet, having worked with the PD or others in the development of the project statement would be taking a true system perspective to proposals. When you finish this year’s proposals, will you begin working on ideas for next year’s program, or will you wait for the next round of RFP’s?

According to Senge: "Systems thinking finds its greatest benefits in helping us distinguish high- from low-leverage changes in highly complex situations. In effect, the art of systems thinking lies in seeing through complexity to the underlying structures generating change." The art of seeing the forest as well as the trees. Occasionally take time to mentally step aside from what you are doing and make sure you have a grasp of the bigger picture.

Tom Urbanik

---

Tom Stout’s last day with TTI was February 26, 1999. Tom made considerable contributions to TTI over the last several years in the areas of ITS, traffic operations, and traffic signal systems. Tom also served on a number of committees and advisory groups that kept TTI linked with national efforts. His expertise, wisdom, and guidance will be missed. Tom currently plans to stay in the Corpus Christi area and can still be contacted as a resource. We wish Tom the best in his future pursuits.

Chris Poe

---

The division has purchased two Ditto Max Professional Tape Backup Drives that can be checked out from me in room 405M. Programs will be responsible for supplying their tape backup cartridges. A 10 GB cartridge can be purchased for approximately $35.

Beth Neilson
Research Implementation: A key component of the TOG mission is to facilitate innovations that promote implementation. If our research results are not implemented by the profession, then our efforts in vain. There are a variety of mechanisms that can be used to publicize information on the findings from the research program and how to implement these findings.

Keep research implementation in mind as the TxDOT research program moves forward. When drafting the implementation segment of your proposal, consider who will be the end-user of the research results, in what format should the results be packaged to be most effectively used, who will develop the user information in the specified format, who should endorse the information and how should it be distributed, will training be required, what type, and who will develop the materials, should the results be presented at conferences, and how will user feedback be obtained.

Implementation products go beyond the traditional research report, so think outside the box. A carefully constructed implementation plan can help provide TxDOT with the tools they need to easily disseminate research results. For further information, see Chapter 8 of the Research and Technology Transfer Manual.

Education and Outreach Materials: I recently provided each office with copies of education and outreach materials targeted at K-12 students. The packets include powerpoint presentations, bookmarks, hands-on activities, ideas, and resources for additional information. If you have the opportunity to speak to such an audience, please browse through the packet and feel free to use anything that meets your needs. If you develop materials that others might like to use or know of resources that might be helpful, please forward it to me so I can distribute it. The intent of this initiative is to reach out to young people and encourage them to consider transportation as a career path.

TAMUS Council for Distance Learning: The TAMUS Council for Distance Learning recently met at Texas A&M International University. A key agenda item was the development of Edusource, the forthcoming center for distance education that will serve as a central "clearinghouse" for the Texas A&M University System. Other items included the intellectual property policy associated with technology-mediated instruction and issues related to quality in distance education. Updates on all distance education initiatives can be found at http://online.tamu.edu/council. If you have any experiences with distance learning that you would like to share with the council, please let me know.

HELLO AND GOODBYE!

Hello and Welcome

Scott Byrd rejoins the Houston office as an Engineering Research Associate. Scott worked several semesters as a COOP student in Houston while attending TAMU as an undergraduate. Following graduation, Scott worked in Kansas City for the consulting firm Burns & McDonnell. Welcome aboard.

Goodbye and Best Wishes

Ann Roshini Paul has left the TransLink® Roadside Equipment Laboratory to take up a teaching assistantship in the Department of Computer Science. We wish her good luck in all future endeavors.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional Development Library: New additions to the library include a series of interactive CDs. New CDs available include Microsoft Access and 3 levels of Microsoft Word. A sound card is required to use these CDs. Video tapes are also available on Word, Excel, WordPerfect, and Windows 95. All materials may be checked out from me in room 405M.

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to Mark Wooldridge on his recent promotion from Assistant Research Engineer to Associate Research Engineer. Mark is currently the principal investigator for two projects in the Traffic Analysis Program, is assisting in a number of other projects, and continues to make progress on his Ph.D.
TOG ANNUAL MEETING

The verdict is in, and the TOG Annual Meeting will be Friday, May 21st, 1999 at 9:30 a.m. at the Salado Civic Center. Salado is approximately 45 miles north of Austin on IH-35 and offers a variety of activities including golf, antiques, and regional shopping. So, those who would like to make a weekend of it, won't be disappointed. With respect to the meeting: if you have any ideas you would like to share, please contact one of us. We're still drafting a program, so nothing is in concrete...we can be flexible! The 1999 TOG Annual Meeting Committee members are: Beverly Kuhn, Jim Carvell, Rene Arredondo, Paul Carlson, Natilie Johnson, Lisa Patke, and Larry Rilett.

MEANWHILE BACK AT THE RANCH

Jerry Ullman traveled to San Antonio in February to make a presentation about the National Work Zone Safety Information Clearinghouse at the American Traffic Safety Services (ATSSA) Annual Convention and Traffic Expo.

SOUND BITES FROM HOUSTON

The Houston office is working on strengthening relations with area universities. Tony Voigt is in his second semester of teaching a Transportation Engineering course at Prairie View A&M. Dave Fenno is also expanding his experience by teaching a Transportation Systems course at TSU. Robert Benz is assisting both Tony and Dave with the teaching effort. This is one step toward fostering closer relations with TTI's Regional Divisions.

DOUBLE TAKE

Sometimes you wonder what were people thinking. Below is a partial list of the actual FHWA office routing symbols effective February 1999.

Planning and Environment (CBU) HEP
Office of Metropolitan Planning and Programs HEMP
Office of Human Environment HEHE
Office of Real Estate Services HERE
Operations (CBU) HOP
Office of Research and Technology Services HRTS
Administrative Service Team (Atlanta) HAD-SO
Administrative Service Team (Denver) HAD-WE
Office of Acquisition Management HAAM
Administration (SBU) HAD

Compliments of Tim Lomax

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Mar 4 Russell Henk
Mar 12 Kevin Hoppers
Mar 15 Tricia Jost
Mar 29 Kay Fitzpatrick
Apr 1 Bryan Raney
Apr 3 Michael Dixon
Apr 4 Carroll Messer
Apr 8 Beverly Kuhn
Apr 10 Hassan Charara
Apr 17 Marc Jacobson
Apr 20 Rhett Gordon
Apr 25 Kerry Williams
Apr 26 Kevin Balke
Apr 30 Beth Neilson

Y2K SOLUTION

This short report has just been sent from the Texas A&M Computer Sciences Department to the Board of Regents:

Our staff has completed the 18 months of work on time and on budget. We have gone through every line of code in every program in every system. We have analyzed all databases, all data files, including backups and historic archives, and modified all data to reflect the Change. We are proud to report that we have completed the *Y-to-K-date change mission, and have now implemented all changes to all programs and all data to reflect your new standards: Januark, Februark, March, April, Mak, June, Julk, August, September, October, November, December. As well as: Sundak, Mondak, Tuesdak, Wednesdak, Thursdak, Fridak, and Saturdak.

We trust that this is satisfactory, because to be honest, none of this Y to K change has made any sense to us. But we understand it is a global problem, and our team is glad to help in any way possible. And what does the year 2000 have to do with it? Speaking of which, what do you think we ought to do next year when the two-digit year rolls over from 99 to 00?

Sincerely,
Texas A&M Computer Sciences Department

New Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project #</th>
<th>PI</th>
<th>Sponsor</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>404691</td>
<td>Ed Seymour</td>
<td>ITE</td>
<td>Disseminate Information on ITS National Architecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>473550</td>
<td>Steve Venglar</td>
<td>NAS-TRB-NCHRP</td>
<td>High-Speed Rail IDEA Program: Advanced Intersection Controller Response to Railroad Perception</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>