



ATTRACTORS
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IN THIS MONTH'S EDITION, NETWORK DIRECTOR ROYCE HOLLADAY, TALKS ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY IN A COMPLEX SYSTEM.

For all our clients—for profit and not, large and small—sustainability is a critical factor in the development and implementation of change efforts.

- “How do we make sure these changes will last over time?”
- “What programs or structures will support us in the face of constant change?”

These questions haunt our clients as they work for long-term success for their organizations, their employees, shareholders, communities, and other stakeholders.

Organizations are complex and the systems that sustain them are massively entangled. No one factor can be teased out as the one that assures long-term sustainability.

Even the definition of “sustainability” is changing over time. In the past, sustainability meant building structures that could withstand the test of time. Today, technology brings greater power and facility, environments evolve, economic and demographic landscapes shift, so any structures we build will be obsolete tomorrow. Now, sustainability means maintaining the purpose of an initiative, regardless of the structures that support it.

The most effective approach we have found for building sustainable systems is to use a set of six questions to guide our decisions throughout the process.

- 1. What connections are we building into our system?**
 - to current work?
 - to other departments and staff?
 - to our stakeholders or community?
- 2. In what ways are we planning for continuous assessment?**
 - for fit in the environment?
 - against success criteria?
 - for continuous improvement?

3. What levels of commitment support this effort?

- of individuals?
- of resources?
- of the whole organization?

4. How well aligned is this work?

- with the organizational direction?
- with policies and procedures?
- with external forces and trends?

5. What communications system have we built in?

- with whom do we communicate?
- what do we communicate?
- how do we communicate?

6. What tools and processes we are using, and how can we make them explicit and intentional?

- for planning?
- for supports?
- for documentation?

Each question is addressed within a broad context that encourages ongoing training and development for individuals throughout the organization.

At the Human Systems Dynamics Institute we support leaders in bringing about change by helping them ask the right questions about what is happening in their organizations. Let us talk with you about how we can help you plan for and implement initiatives that are effective and sustainable. For more information, contact rholladay@hdsinstitute.org.