

Rudi Aksim  
Box 86  
Carp Ontario Canada K0A1L0  
613-839-2990  
rudi@aksim.org

## **A Systems Approach to Training**

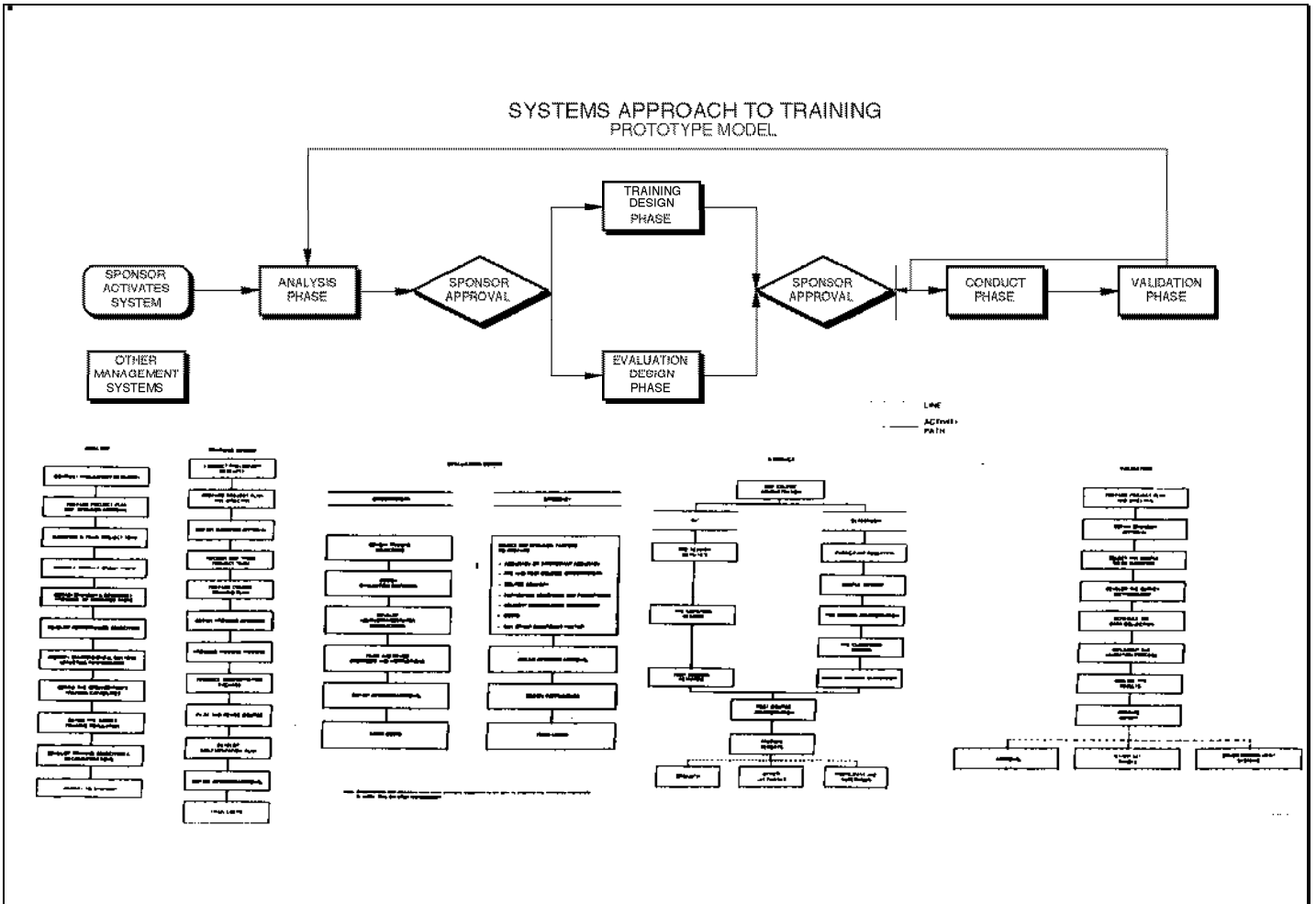
The first we knew of the change in plans was the large rolling blackboard in the hall outside the cafeteria: "LEARNING CIRCLE MEETS HERE>>>".

This was a surprise to me. I had thought the plan for our Thursday-evening Learning Circle was to hear a short lecture first, and then, at, say, eight o'clock, move to the kitchens for a demonstration cooking lesson. On that Thursday evening we had arranged to do two presentations although this was not what we usually did. Normally the Learning Circle—a group of teachers who came together once a week to improve their instructional techniques—would have only one presentation, followed by a discussion. It was near the end of term. The reason for the change was that we were all anxious to be off for the summer but still had two people who had not yet done their demonstrations.

Of itself, this change in plans was not a big problem, even when I realized that the teacher doing the cooking demonstration had done it without any consultation. "No problem," said Stanley, the first presenter now pushed into second place. "I have a short half-hour presentation." The cooking demonstration proceeded, and vegetables were cut and meat singed along with

lightning chopping techniques and flames from the gas fires reflected in the ruddy complexion and white uniform of the cooking master. Salad and vegetables and Boef Stroganoff were prepared and we all became ever sleepier through warmth and conversation and good food. I could only conclude that the cooking teacher felt that he didn't really have a presentation ready but if he cooked and served us a bang-up meal we would not evaluate him harshly. The result was that, at eight o'clock, rather than moving to the second part of the evening—the lecture—we were in the middle of our first course. I was concerned for Stanley and his lecture. He was quite unconcerned. "No problem," he assured me.

We still had the lecture on our agenda, however. Reluctantly, we decided to leave dessert for later (we could come back, after all), and move to a classroom to give Stanley a chance to do his talk. At about eight fifteen, after an hour in the kitchen and about forty minutes at the sumptuous dinner, we walked groggily over to E-Block and assembled in the classroom to hear what our second presenter had to say. Stanley fiddled self-consciously with the overhead projector. "My talk," he said quietly, still adjusting the overhead for maximum effect, "will deal with a Systems Approach to Training, as, ahem, set out in this simple plan." With this he turned on the bulb to fill the screen with this diagram:



As he did this a quite involuntary, quiet but very audible "eughhhhhh" sound squeezed out of the seven or eight of us sitting in the room.

"This can't be," I thought.

"No problem! All I need is a half-hour!" our speaker said. For one moment I thought that he had simply put too much stuff on his overhead. He only intended to talk about the general flowchart at the top of the diagram, I fervently hoped. This part of the overhead could, conceivably, be presented, in a very

general way, in half-an-hour or forty minutes. But, alas, this was not his plan.

Rather, after a short description of the general model, Stanley's plan was to speak about each of the—what appeared to us to be hundreds of—little boxes at the bottom of the diagram. And, it quickly emerged, he was not intending to dismiss any of these boxes with a word or two. Even though the print in most of these boxes was too small for us to read—even when it was projected— he had paragraphs and paragraphs of information about each box.

At about the start of "TRAINING DESIGN" —about five after nine o'clock in real time— the cooking teacher rejoined us for dessert and coffee were ready back at the demonstration kitchen. Mid way through "TRAINING DESIGN"— about nine thirty— the first of the audience had to leave. "My baby-sitter..." the departing teacher whispered in my ear. Discussion of the EVALUATION DESIGN phase tended to mirror the discussion of TRAINING DESIGN and got us to after ten. When I say "us," I mean it got Stanley and me to ten thirty, for everyone else had left by then.

Clearly, given the fact that over half of the little boxes were still in front of this, it was time to wrap up. "Stanley," I said, "I'm sorry to interrupt, but really...." "Oh, I understand," he said and turned off the overhead. We walked out of the classroom together. "How do you think it went?" I asked. "Perhaps I

should have planned for more time," he said. "Certainly I could have got it done in an hour."

Rudi Aksim, 3 November 1992

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