

Recap of "Seeing Systems" with Richard Phillips, Sept. 2008

All,

Over the past two weeks, we have been enriched by conversation with Richard Phillips - the September 9th event was followed by an overflow session last Saturday afternoon. Richard, who retired from the CIA in January, has been developing leaders, training, and teaching at area universities for years. In addition, he has been working with the Power and Systems concepts of Barry Oshry* since 1997. Richard is a graduate of the Power Lab, the core Power and Systems Program, and he continues to serve on the staff of the Lab when not otherwise engaged. Here's my attempt to summarize what we discussed.

The premise behind Oshry's work is that we work within systems that have a profound influence upon the outcomes we get. But - as Richard put it Saturday - "we don't see systems; we see people." Sometimes we ascribe motivations and powers to other people that don't accurately reflect reality, and we also occupy "space" that does not correspond to our fixed locations on the organization chart. The complexity of our environment often leads to organizational outcomes that are less valuable than the ones we could be having, if we understood more about the systems within which we're working. Depending on how much risk is associated with the outcomes, this can matter a lot.

What the Power Lab does is to invite willing participants into a compressed 72-hour experience, complete with anthropologists and one-on-one coaching. This experience makes organizational system dynamics, and each person's habitual method of coping with them, visible. Participants are then offered a way of seeing and relating that has proven to be more powerful and effective.

Richard Phillips invites you to learn more from Barry Oshry when he is in Washington the morning of November 19th (please see attachment).

A list of participant affiliations follows:

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American University
Booz Allen Hamilton Inc.
Crowley & Co.
Department of Commerce
Department of Education
Department of Health and Human Services
Department of Homeland Security
Department of State
Department of Transportation
e-Execution, LLC
Environmental Protection Agency
Government Accountability Office
Homeland Security Institute
Lisa Gardner Consulting
Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Office of Management and Budget
Ricks Eagle LLC
Senior Executives Association
University of Maryland, Baltimore County
Virginia Department of Transportation

Work experience levels ranged from intern to senior executive. Please consider joining us in the future.
Sincerely,

Kitty Wooley
U.S. Department of Education

* <http://powerandsystems.metacanvas.com/EN/index.html>