Systems Archetypes at a Glance
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Archetype Template and Description		Guidelines
Drifting Goals	In a "Drifting Goals" situation, a gap between desired performance and current reality can be resolved either by taking corrective action to achieve the goal or by lowering the goal. The gap is often resolved by a gradual lowering of the goal. Over time, the performance level also drifts downward. This drift may happen so gradually, even without deliberate action, that the organization is not even aware of its impact.	• Drifting performance figures are usually indicators that the "Drifting Goals" archetype is at work and that real corrective actions are not being taken. • A critical aspect of avoiding a potential "Drifting Goals" scenario is to determine what drives the setting of the goals.
Goal, Pressure to Lower Goal, B2, Gap, Actual, B1, Corrective Action, Delay		
Escalation	In an "Escalation" situation, one party (A) takes actions to counter a perceived threat. These actions are then perceived by the other party (B) as creating an imbalance in the system that then makes them feel threatened. So, B responds to close the gap, creating an imbalance from A's perspective, and on it goes. The dynamic of two parties, each trying to achieve a sense of "safety," becomes an overall reinforcing process that escalates tension on both sides, tracing a figure-8 pattern with the two balancing loops in this archetype.	To break an escalation structure, ask the following questions: • What is the relative measure that pits one party against the other, and can you change it? • What are the significant delays in the system that may distort the true nature of the threat? • What are the deep-rooted assumptions that lie beneath the actions taken in response to the threat?
A's Result, B's Result, Activity by A, B1, Quality of A's Position Relative to B's, B2, Activity by B, Threat to A, Threat to B		
Fixes That Fail	In a "Fixes That Fail" situation, a problem symptom cries out for resolution. A solution is quickly implemented, which alleviates the symptom. However, the solution produces unintended consequences that, after a delay, cause the original problem symptom to return to its previous level or even get worse. This development leads us to apply the same (or similar) fix again. This reinforcing cycle of fixes is the essence of "Fixes That Fail."	• Breaking a "Fixes That Fail" cycle usually requires acknowledging that the fix is merely alleviating a symptom, and making a commitment to solve the real problem *now*. • A two-pronged attack of applying the fix and planning out the fundamental solution will help ensure that you don't get caught in a perpetual cycle of solving yesterday's "solutions."
Problem Symptom, B1, Fix, R2, Unintended Consequence, Delay		
Growth and Underinvestment	In a "Growth and Underinvestment" situation, growth approaches a limit that could be eliminated or postponed if capacity investments were made. Instead, as a result of policies or delays in the system, demand (or performance) degrades, limiting further growth. This leads to further withholding of investment or even reductions in capacity, causing even worse performance.	• Dig into the assumptions that drive capacity investment decisions. If past performance dominates as a consideration, try to balance that perspective with a fresh look at demand and the factors that drive its growth. • If there is a potential for growth, build capacity in anticipation of future demand.
Growth Effort, R1, Demand, B2, Impact of Limiting Factor, Performance Standard, Capacity, B3, Perceived Need to Invest, Investment in Capacity, Delay		

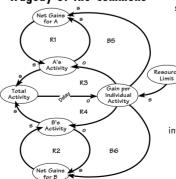| Archetype Template and Description		Guidelines
Limits to Success	In a "Limits to Success" scenario, growing actions initially lead to success, which encourages even more of those efforts. Over time, however, the success itself causes the system to encounter limits, which slows down improvements in results. As the success triggers the limiting action and performance declines, the tendency is to focus even more on the initial growing actions.	• The archetype is most helpful when it is used well in advance of any problems, to see how the cumulative effects of continued success might lead to future problems. • Use the archetype to explore questions such as, "What kinds of pressures are building up in the organization as a result of the growth?" • Look for ways to relieve pressures or remove limits *before* an organizational gasket blows.
Efforts, R1, Performance, B2, Limiting Action, Constraint		
Shifting the Burden/Addiction	In a "Shifting the Burden" situation, a problem symptom can be addressed by applying a symptomatic solution or a more fundamental solution. When a symptomatic solution is implemented, the problem symptom is reduced or disappears, which lessens the pressure for implementing a more fundamental solution. Over time, the symptom resurfaces, and another round of symptomatic solutions is implemented in a vicious, figure-8 reinforcing cycle. The symptomatic solutions often produce side-effects that further divert attention away from more fundamental solutions.	• Problem symptoms are usually easier to recognize than the other elements of the structure. • If the side-effect has become the problem, you may be dealing with an "Addiction" structure. • Whether a solution is "symptomatic" or "fundamental" often depends on one's perspective. Explore the problem from differing perspectives in order to come to a more comprehensive understanding of what the fundamental solution may be.
Symptomatic Solution, B1, Problem Symptom, R3, Side-effect, B2, Fundamental Solution, Delay		
Success to the Successful	In a "Success to the Successful" situation, two or more individuals, groups, projects, initiatives, etc. are vying for a limited pool of resources to achieve success. If one of them starts to become more successful (or is historically already more successful) than the others, it tends to garner more resources, thereby increasing the likelihood of continued success. Its initial success justifies devoting more resources while robbing the other alternatives of resources and opportunities to build their own success, even if the others are superior alternatives.	• Look for reasons why the system was set up to create just one "winner." • Chop off one half of the archetype by focusing efforts and resources on one group, rather than creating a "winner-take-all" competition. • Find ways to make teams collaborators rather than competitors. • Identify goals or objectives that define success at a level higher than the individual players A and B.
Success of A, Allocation to A Instead of B, Success of B, R1, R2, Resources to A, Resources to B		
Tragedy of the Commons	In a "Tragedy of the Commons" situation, individuals make use of a common resource by pursuing actions for their own enjoyment or benefit, without concern for the collective impact of everyone's actions. At some point, the sum of all individual activity overloads the "commons," and all parties involved experience diminishing benefits. The commons may even collapse.	• Effective solutions for a "Tragedy of the Commons" scenario never lie at the individual level. • Ask questions such as: "What are the incentives for individuals to persist in their actions?" "Can the long-term collective loss be made more real and immediate to the individual actors?" • Find ways to reconcile short-term individual rewards with long-term cumulative consequences. A governing body that is chartered with the sustainability of the resource can help.
Net Gains for A, R1, B5, A's Activity, R3, Total Activity, Gain per Individual Activity, Resource Limit, R4, B's Activity, R2, B6, Net Gains for B, Delay		