

Breaking News

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'Systems thinking' management seminar set

Laura Newpoff

The Industry & Technology Council of Central Ohio and Babbage Simmel are bringing one of the world's top experts in "systems thinking" to Central Ohio next month for seminars on the management subject.

Kambiz Maani will offer his views on what is becoming an increasingly popular management approach that has been put to use at Harley-Davidson, Ford Motor and Hewlett-Packard.

"If you trace our business and management philosophy, you can actually trace it back to the 17th century," Maani said. "We have inherited a mentality which roughly can be referred to as divide and conquer. In order to understand a complex phenomenon, you divide it into small pieces, study individual parts and then put them together. ... That was very useful, but now our world has become a lot more complex.

"We see that the result of that thinking is an over-fragmentation of the organization," he said. "And this is present everywhere - in our government, in our businesses, in our families. We have too many divisions and sections."

Conceived at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the management philosophy helps executives foresee and examine the consequences of strategic decisions and aids them as they look for solutions to chronic problems within companies.

Maani, who holds a Ph.D., teaches in the management science and information systems department at the University of Auckland in New Zealand. He's also a consultant on systems thinking, with clients that include Unisys, Aetna Health, Caterpillar, Pacific Steel and KPMG.

Since 1991, Maani's been a visiting scholar at MIT, where he has worked on the topic with Peter Senge.

Senge, director of the Center for Organizational Learning at MIT's Sloan School of Management, is the author of "The Fifth Discipline -The Art & Practice of Learning Organization." According to Senge, systems thinking is the fifth discipline or core capability of learning organizations.

Babbage Simmel was able to lure Maani to town because its president, Louis Maani, is the academic's cousin.

The Industry & Technology Council helps technology-based businesses tap resources necessary to be competitive. Dublin-based Babbage Simmel provides network technology consulting and training services.