

Making Connections

Purpose: Recognising that systems can overlap or be nested (all are inter connected)

Materials: Marker pens and flip chart paper

Time: 20 mins.

Introduction

*Rather like a nest of tables, one system may fit within a larger system. Some participants may recall how children make up addresses for themselves, starting with their home and extending to England, the world, the universe. This is one way of playing with the idea of **nested systems**. Similarly, participants' companies are systems which are inter-connected with other larger systems near and far.*

Activity

1. Ask participants to work in small groups of between two and four. In the middle of a sheet of flipchart paper, write the name of one of your companies and draw a **dotted** line around it.
2. Now, in discussion with your group, draw lines linking the company to other 'systems' that you think this company is connected to. These links are likely to be two-way as the company will contribute to and/or draw from the other systems. Encourage participants to think as widely as possible!
3. Ask each group to show their diagram to the whole class.
4. If other groups have thought of connections that are relevant to your company then add them to your diagram.

Examples might include: the national electricity grid, a parent company, the British economy, a trade confederation, a trade union, the electorate of a Parliamentary constituency, the atmosphere, the flow of 'x' material through the environment from raw state to landfill, 'x' number of families related to employees, shareholders, etc.

5. Share the examples above with the class. Did they mention of any of these?
6. Why did we particularly ask you to draw a *dotted* line around the company?

No company is an island. It may appear to us to be a separate organisation with a clear purpose but it is also just a set of materials, people and activities that we choose to draw a boundary around. (Distribute *Making Connections* handout).

Being aware of this fact helps us to:

- more readily accept the unexpected – and therefore be more able to handle it
- see the value in taking care of the community around us
- recognise that environmental concerns will have an impact on our actions (and *vice versa*)
- consider relevant issues in our business planning that we might otherwise have missed
- do what we can (within the limits of our resources) to support the larger systems that are supporting us.