1) Transformation and Continuous Improvement

A Double Loop Process

KCS uses the powerful concept of double loop learning to organize the KCS Practices. Double loop learning comes from some academic work by Chris Argyris and double loop processes have been embraced by the systems thinking community. Double loop processes are typically described as consisting of an A loop and a B loop. The A loop is the activity of getting work done; it is often reactive in that the activity is triggered by an event or an interaction. The B loop defines the A loop process and standards. The B loop is also reflective. It is a process of continuous improvement for the A loop and the output of the A loop. The B loop activities assess the health of the system by analyzing the patterns and trends that emerge from a collection of A loop activities and outputs, and identify opportunities for improvement.

The A loop in KCS is called the Solve Loop. This is what knowledge workers do in getting their work done. The B loop in KCS is called the Evolve Loop. This is the bigger picture of what is happening in the organization across many A loop events, and is what management focuses on.

Judgment is required in both the Solve Loop and the Evolve Loop. Double loop processes encourages people to think in the context of the activity as well as the larger implications of what they are doing and learning. The Solve Loop is about doing things right: handling work activities or task in an appropriate way and with an understanding of how each activity will impact the process of continuous improvement in the Evolve Loop. The Evolve Loop is about doing the right things: by analyzing a collection of Solve Loop activities, we can identify improvements in those activities and influence the objectives and outcomes.

Double loop processes are powerful in that they are self-correcting. Persistent learning and continuous improvement are inherent in double loop systems. Learning occurs at two levels: the event level (Solve Loop) and the organizational level (Evolve Loop). The knowledge created as a by-product of an interaction is captured: learning in the Solve Loop. Analysis of the patterns and trends across a collection of Solve Loop activities enables us to identify improvements that are based on the collective experience of the organization. The opportunity for improvements span many areas including improvements in:

- Customer offerings (products or services)
- Customer experience and engagement processes
- Policies
- Business processes (internal and external)

The Evolve Loop learning drives continuous improvement in processes, policies and outcomes based on the collective experience of the organization.