



Professional Round Table

The integration of systems thinking into Entrepreneurship



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Entrepreneurship lacks a single definition, though it is vital to the economy. Derived from the French *entreprendre* ("to undertake"), it is interpreted in various ways, from small business ownership to creating growth-oriented businesses. In short, entrepreneurship is the process of creating and managing new ventures, driven by innovation, strategic decisions, and the ability to predict and plan for future success. It emerges from a mix of social, economic, psychological, legal, and technological influences. This ever-changing and often uncertain activity combines resources like capital, talent, and technology to achieve business goals. It can apply to ventures of all sizes and across various sectors, both economic and non-economic.

The integration of systems thinking into entrepreneurship offers a promising pathway to align business practices with sustainable goals. By encouraging entrepreneurs to adopt a systems-based perspective, the approach aims to foster a broader understanding of their ventures' roles within social and environmental contexts, moving beyond narrow economic objectives. One critical aspect of this approach is emphasizing interconnectedness over isolation. Rather than viewing their businesses as separate entities, entrepreneurs are encouraged to consider how their actions impact a network of relationships that extends to societal and environmental levels. This paradigm shift supports resilient practices by helping entrepreneurs recognise the wider impact of their ventures. Another key element is moving from a linear to a systemic understanding of cause and effect relationships. In systems thinking, feedback loops and long-term consequences are crucial, encouraging entrepreneurs to anticipate how their decisions reverberate over time: adopting systemic product designs and mindful resource usage, for example, can mitigate the negative environmental impact often overlooked in traditional business models. Complexity is also embraced through the concept of emergence, where outcomes arise from dynamic interactions within a system. Entrepreneurs are prompted to seek leverage points that can drive positive change, recognizing that even small adjustments can yield substantial impacts. This perspective departs from a purely competitive mindset, encouraging collaboration and resource-sharing within a collective ecosystem. Viewing the business as part of a larger whole rather than focusing on isolated elements is another key component. This approach can help entrepreneurs shift their focus from immediate transactions to an entire lifecycle approach, considering not just consumer interactions but the long-term environmental and social impacts of their venture. Finally, the concept of synthesis invites entrepreneurs to combine resources innovatively, with an eye toward creating ventures that serve both organizational, as well as broader societal needs. This approach contrasts with traditional entrepreneurship, which often prioritizes shareholder value, by encouraging a mindset oriented toward shared, systemic value. These systems-based principles cultivate a sustainable mindset in entrepreneurship, pushing ventures to contribute positively to the economy and society.

The round table discussion will focus on the elements of a systems driven leadership paradigm that enables an entrepreneur to formulate forward-thinking strategies that inspire and engage a group of individuals, motivating them to commit to the vision and work together in identifying and capitalising on opportunities for strategic value creation.