

CHAOS INC.™

SIMULATION AND SEMINAR

**A "Table Top" Simulation
and Seminar Exploring
Chaos and Complex
Systems Dynamics in
Organizations**



Event focus: An improvisational, collaborative adventure into chaos and complexity dynamics in real-world organizations.

Topic areas: Leadership • Strategic/ Scenario Planning • Knowledge Management • Information Technology (IT)/ Business Integration • Operational Redesign of Complex Adaptive Systems • Organizational Change Management/Transformation. Especially powerful in conjunction with enterprise innovations.

Appropriate Participants:

Leaders and key employees at all levels (including multi-systems enterprises), consultants, and graduate students and researchers in business, systems engineering, IT management, group/ system dynamics and public administration.

Time: **1/2 Day** (2.5-3 hours), **1-Day** (6-7 hours), **2-Day** (11-14 hours) - *Adapted to specific organizations.*

Number of Participants: Minimum-10 ▪ Optimum-20 ▪ Maximum-35

Participant Materials:

Includes Workbook, simulation roles, and simulation materials to support transition of principles to actual organizations. Participants receive Certificate, a tee shirt, and a nonlinear tool.

“The imperfect and flexible principles of nature lead to greater stability and resilience in natural systems than we have produced in ours – both technological and social – by following the mechanical laws we assumed were natural.”

– Elisabet Sahtouris, The Biology of Globalization

SEMINAR OBJECTIVES FOR CHAOS, INC.™

1. Draw connections between complex systems and chaos to real-world experience (CHAOS, Inc.™ requires no previous knowledge of the field).
2. Engage in an environment created specifically to explore realities of organizations under pressure of true-to-life “chaotic” and adaptive systems events.
3. Identify what happens at each stage of organizational turbulence and uncertainty, the special challenges at each stage, and why traditional responses are failing.
4. Explore adaptive approaches to complex systems and how to integrate to create truly new complex enterprises that can successfully tackle such challenges as:
**Strategic Planning • Turbulent Markets • Changing Business Models Restructuring
•Organizational Transformation • Disaster Planning and Mitigation**
5. Map simulation experiences to “back-home” organizational challenges to identify new assets and approaches that can be applied to actual organizations.

ABOUT THE CHAOS INC.™ SIMULATION AND SEMINAR

WHAT IT IS: Originally designed in Fall of 1990, the CHAOS, Inc.™ simulation and seminar is a unique experiential exercise based on chaos and complexity dynamics that has been applied in workshop to real-world social and organizational systems across sectors. CHAOS, Inc.™ draws on techniques of jazz, improvisation, collaboration, and experiential group dynamics to provide a reality-based experience to engage, observe, and shape complex adaptive systems.

HOW IT DEVELOPED: As systems practitioners, we found ourselves challenged by organizations encountering more and more disorder, turbulence, unpredictability, and change. We designed CHAOS, Inc.™ to provide a kind of safety zone in which to explore and test fresh ideas to better meet 21st century challenges. CHAOS, Inc. has been presented over a number of years to a wide variety of organizations in business, the military, government, education, and academia. The exercise continues to evolve as a robust, relevant instrument to examine and build new, more powerful organizational strategies.

HOW IT WORKS: CHAOS, Inc.™ creates a simulated “company” subjected to typical events, uncertainties, and pressures. In response to these encounters, the company takes varied routes to far-from-equilibrium or chaotic states. Participants face multiple dilemmas. The company may become mired in dead-end solutions (or even fruitless “successes”!). Or they can evolve to new and more “chaos-adaptive” or complex-change-resilient solutions. Unlike most organizational simulations (but like the real world) this seminar is a true experiential laboratory.

HOW IT MIMICS REAL ORGANIZATIONS: Participants are not provided with “canned” answers or predetermined outcomes. Indeed, no one yet knows how to predict how

any organization will respond to uncertainty. However, there are lessons to be learned. “Retroactive observation” can lead to strategic foresight. CHAOS, Inc.™ participants receive a chance to reinvent their company. The adventure is to create more adaptive, evolvable, and sustainable organizations. Then -- test the new strategies and structures. All the while participants are building assets and new approaches to leverage in their actual organizations.

SOME PARTICIPANT COMMENTS:

One participant said: “My only criticism of this workshop is that it was too much like my real work life! And now that I’m looking more closely, I see there are several things I can do differently that will yield more creative approaches to my situation.”

Another said: “I actually decided to move into organizational consulting to avoid encountering the real challenges my clients experience every day. This simulation places me smack in the middle of those challenges and forces me to wrestle alongside my clients, rather than just giving them advice from outside their business concerns.”

Following a presentation engaging a cross-section of graduate students in Business, Public Administration, and Systems Engineering - “In one day, this simulation taught my students more about actual organizational life than any of our classes usually do in a semester! This experience accelerated learning about the issues that our graduates will have to grapple with on a daily basis.”

– Peter Vaill, then-Director of the PhD program at George Washington University School of Business and Public Management



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VOLVOX is an actual biological organism, a micro-colony of independent cells that form into an elective, globe-shaped dynamic system. These miniature “planets” cooperate internally for the good of the entire organism, propel on their axes toward light, and generate new life forms through whole-system effort. **VOLVOX** -- the consulting firm -- is dedicated to bring such emergent organizations to success.