

## Critical Systems Heuristics

I said I would give some thought, in an odd moment late at night, to a TSO way of describing CSH (as a TSO Product) that will be easier for the lay person to understand.

Chambers Dictionary gives:

heuristic hú-ris-tik,

adjective serving or leading to find out; encouraging the desire to find out; (of method, argument, etc) depending on assumptions based on past experience; consisting of guided trial and error.

noun the art of discovery in logic; the method in education by which the pupil is set to find out things for himself; (in plural) principles used in making decisions when all possibilities cannot be fully explored.

I've been looking at the slides from our training day.

At first read, they are gobbledegook!

At second read they still are! But persevere.

Heuristic is a posh word for working things out for yourself when you haven't got all the information you need.

I am beginning to feel that finding out about CSH from the evidence available to me is itself an exercise in heuristics!

So let's approach it from the other end.

What are the possible literal meanings of "Critical Systems Heuristics" ?

Critical Systems are the internal resources and mechanisms upon which an organisation depends. But is CSH about:

- working out which are the 'critical' systems?
- or discovering and deciding things about the known 'critical' systems?

The slides refer to 'The Plan'. Is 'The Plan' a Critical System? Let's assume it is. So, am I right in thinking that underneath all that clever (?) verbiage in the slides, we can discover that CSH is simply a technique for exposing 'plans' - which may be 'plans' for future action or 'plans' that are already in operation - to a more or less random iterative intellectual digestion process, not only of the people who have responsibility for them, but of those who have an interest in them or are affected by them but are not formally in a position to control or influence them.

You probably knew that all the time!

Uncomfortable experience early in my management career (National Service in fact) taught me that the data and brainpower available to an individual manager (officer) is rarely equal to that of the combined resources of a large group of subordinates. The latter have a critical interest in the decision. They have experience of similar situations and often suffer more directly the consequences of wrong decisions. They have time, opportunity of association and freedom from presumptive outcomes. Their natural digestive process of forming a consensus view is an important potential contributor to critical decisions.

So is that what CSH is?

A structured way of getting the troops to help with the decision making.