The Complications of the "Soft" Side of the Ideal Final Result

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When we are doing TRIZ problem solving, one of the first things we do (after we have defined the right problem area, zone of conflict, etc.), is ask ourselves, "What is the Ideal Final Result?" We frequently refer to this as the IFR or simply ideality. Let's take a look at a problem such as "how to do a known surgical procedure". This answer might be fairly straightforward, but great surgeons of the world will argue about whether the surgery needs to be done at all, the timing of it, the potential consequences, and the details of the procedure itself. All of these are variations on what a particular surgeon considers "ideal". The ideal result could mean no surgery at all because of the potential consequences. It could mean to do it at a particular time so as to avoid potential consequences with future plans, either personal or medical. Ideal could mean a chance to try an exploratory surgery that a surgeon has wanted to do for a long time.

But the surgeon isn't the only one involved here, are they? We have at least the patient, the attending nurses, the attending physicians, the hospital staff, the hospital administration, the health insurance company (if they exist for this patient!), the patient's family, and the patient's employer. Does every one of these individuals have the same definition of the ideal final result? Now hopefully, all of these people want the patient to live, but after that, it gets a little fuzzy. If the surgeon insists on using a novel procedure, unapproved by Medicare or the patient's insurance company, but which promises the potential of more favorable results, what's the ideal result? -- The patient's longterm health or his/her financial status with no insurance coverage? How does the hospital administration feel about dealing with the patient when they may not get paid immediately? Ever? Does the patient's employer have a view of ideality if the recovery time varies between these procedures?

There is no right or wrong answer to any of these questions. They are only presented to stimulate your thinking about the fact that there may be multiple views of the idea final result and that it is good for a TRIZ problem solver to think about this fact. Even in a well-executed TRIZ projects, it is not uncommon to see an excellent TRIZ solution go unimplemented because "someone" decided to solve the problem at another point in the process, which was unknown to the original problem solving team. These views of ideality can be greatly colored by the level of the person in the organization as well. Some of you are familiar with the TRIZ 9-Box analytical approach (we'll discuss it in more detail in a later column) and simply looking up and down one level (in this case, the patient and the operating room) could present some interesting insights on making the process more ideal. Has the patient been prepped properly, both mentally and physically? Is the operating room in ideal condition (this too may vary with previous use and intended use?

Take a look at these two situations and give them some thought. Ideas and comments will be included next month.

Situation 1: You are the new Chief Engineer with the copier division of Canon. You are capable of including more and more features into your machine. Yet many of your users have no idea how to use or access these many features (not too dissimilar from many software products!). Consider yourself as the chief engineer, the customer office manager, the office secretary, the

casual user who makes a copy now and then. What is each of your visions of the ideal final result?

Situation 2: You are the human resources manager of a Fortune 500 company, which is about to institute a new performance appraisal system, reducing the number of classifications and varying the time between raises. Before you do this, who are ALL the different people and groups affected and what is their view of an "ideal" pay for performance system? What issues will result? What contradictions will result?

NEXT MONTH: Whose 9-Box (Super-system) Is It?