

# Using Resistance to Change (and the TOC Thinking Processes) to Improve Improvements

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## Abstract

Like “beauty and the beholder,” resistance to change is in the eye of the proposer. The proponent of a change may perceive as resistance what his or her audience considers careful assessment and scrutiny. Almost every change requires the cooperation, collaboration, and co-ownership of others. It is only by giving the assessment and scrutiny of these people full consideration that the change can expect full acceptance. The Theory of Constraints (TOC) Thinking Processes provide a coordinated set of tools to help take full advantage of “resistance to change” to not only improve the original proposal, but also assure effective implementation.

## Introduction

Everyone in an organization is a salesperson, selling his or her ideas, proposals, and recommendations. Even a CEO, president, or owner needs to achieve buy-in of key strategies and tactics from the necessary people if they are to succeed. That success, i.e., the implementation of meaningful improvement in an organization, requires answering three questions: what to change, to what to change to, and how to make the change happen.

Even if an improvement with real potential has been identified by appropriately addressing the first two of these questions, how the third question is dealt with can often make or break the effort. It's not just an issue of technical solutions and project management. It also involves dealing with the dreaded “resistance to change.”

The proponent or champion of a solution faces a dilemma. Does s/he spend limited time and attention on refining the details of the solution or on the politics and buy-in necessary for its success? With the belief that a “perfect” solution will minimize resistance, the focus is usually on the former, setting oneself up to be blindsided by what is felt to be unexpected and unreasonable resistance.

Fortunately, it has been shown that resistance to change can be understood in terms of a series of six layers that consistently and regularly appear. These layers are associated with the three basic questions for change and their objectives and have been identified as...

Questions	Objectives	Layers of Resistance
What to change?	Situation assessment, description of “current reality,” and identification of the core problem or conflict and assumptions that sustain it.  Diagnosis, systemic root cause analysis.	1) Lack of agreement on the problem
To what to change to?	Verbalization of vision/solution, description of strategy to attain the desired state, and avoidance of undesirable side effects.  Prescription, decision-making, and solution development.	2) Lack of agreement on a possible direction for a solution  3) Lack of agreement that the solution will truly address the problem  4) Concern that the solution will lead to new undesirable side effects (“Yes, but...”)

Questions	Objectives	Layers of Resistance
How to make the change happen?	Development of detailed plans and tactics that will clarify what needs to happen. Synchronization of the efforts of the group in the implementation of the strategy.  Planning, team-building, and leadership	5) Lack of a clear path around obstacles blocking the solution  6) Lack of follow-through even after agreement to proceed with the solution (unverbalized fear or concerns)

While not all of these “layers of resistance” arise all the time, when they do they tend to do so in the order listed. Or at least, they should be addressed in that order. After all, there is no point in figuring out how to overcome obstacles and implement a solution (Layer 5) if the idea of the solution itself is not understood and accepted (Layers 2, 3, and 4). The existence of this consistency allows for an equally consistent response, and therefore a systematic process to address it.

The ability to acquire necessary cooperation, collaboration, and even co-ownership is enhanced if the change agent understands the layers of resistance that are usually encountered, and the appropriate steps to take and tools to use within each when communicating the proposal. But the benefit of addressing the layers in the right way goes far beyond simply overcoming resistance. What is often not appreciated is that this same resistance is an invaluable source of improvements to the original proposal. You can take advantage of this benefit with a logical process that is geared to do so, whether starting at the beginning of building a solution or when communicating it for buy-in.

For example, while carefully considering all the layers during the construction of a solution will contribute to the completeness of the solution, layers 4 (“Yes, but...”) and 5 (“We can't do it because...”) are particularly fertile ground for the enhancement of a proposed solution. For example, active solicitation of things that can go wrong (the reservations regarding undesirable side effects) will not only complete the solution by allowing additional pieces to be included to head off those side effects. The involvement of those offering the concerns and possible solutions bring more people into “ownership” roles for the final proposal. The same thing goes for layer 5 - obstacles to implementation. If one can generate or identify more obstacles, the resulting implementation plan will be that much more complete. Those obstacles will exist whether identified or not. It's a far, far better thing to identify and plan for them than to be surprised by them.

Too often, the developer of a proposal is so focused on the good things that will come from it s/he will overlook or even worse, minimize the side effects and obstacles. Like beauty and the beholder, “unexpected and unreasonable” resistance is in the eyes of the proposer; to those “resisting,” they are merely offering careful inquiry and scrutiny or something they are being asked to support. A careful, logical approach to constructing and communicating the proposal for collaboration will go a long way to incorporating this input and making the solution better and easier to implement.

To take advantage of resistance, a “whole-system” view is required as well as an appreciation for the interconnectedness of diverse symptoms and true “root-cause” problems. The Theory of Constraints (TOC) and the Thinking Processes that are part of the TOC body of knowledge provide just such a view and a set of powerful tools that can be used to not only address resistance but also use it to enhance the solution beyond the original concept.

The TOC Thinking Processes are logical “thinking and communication tools” which, while they can be used in standalone situations, together form a coherent problem-solving and change management process. Their generic purpose is to translate intuition into a format that can be discussed rationally, questioned without offense, and modified to more fully reflect the understanding of a situation. They are used for the construction of solutions to problems as well as to facilitate communication, collaboration, and consensus among those that must be involved in its resolution.

## Underlying Concepts of the TOC Thinking Processes

Prior to introducing the specific thinking tools and their relationship to the three questions and the six layers of resistance, I should really describe two overarching “meta-tools” that are at the core of the tools — *sufficiency logic* and *necessity logic*.

Sufficiency logic consists of “If... then... because...” descriptions of why situations exist or why we believe particular actions will result in certain outcomes. Linkages of sufficiency logic are also frequently expressed as “If... and if... and if..., then...” as in the case when it takes the confluence of three pre-existing conditions (the “ifs”) to result in the outcome (the “then”).

Necessity logic often takes the form of “In order to..., we must...,” describing requirements or prerequisites associated with desired outcomes. These requirements may not be sufficient in and of themselves to result in the outcome, but their existence is seen as necessary for it. Linkages based on necessity logic can often be augmented with a “because...” factor as well, which is a very powerful mechanism for surfacing beliefs or assumptions that underlie why we feel we must have A in order to have B.

The Thinking Processes, based on these two logical constructs, get their power from the fact that the human mind seems to be practically “hard-wired” with an innate understanding of when the “if-thens” or the “in-order-to, we-musts” make sense or not, lending themselves to an ease of communication, scrutiny, and revision. They also benefit from graphical formats and presentation, so the mind can readily take in not only the words of the various entities, but also the spatial relationships implied by connecting arrows.

The tools serve to communicate or verbalize the intuition of the participants in a way that lends itself to collaboration and dialogue and results in a description of the “common sense” of the participants.

## **Addressing Layer 1 – Lack of agreement on the problem — The Core Conflict Cloud (CCC) and the Current Reality Tree (CRT)**

The lack of agreement on a problem can have several sources. As a result, there are several steps involved in overcoming this layer. Some of those sources include the distraction of local symptoms and the resultant inability to see a common actionable cause, and a problem definition that fails to clarify that disconnect and therefore triggers the “What’s in it for me?” question.

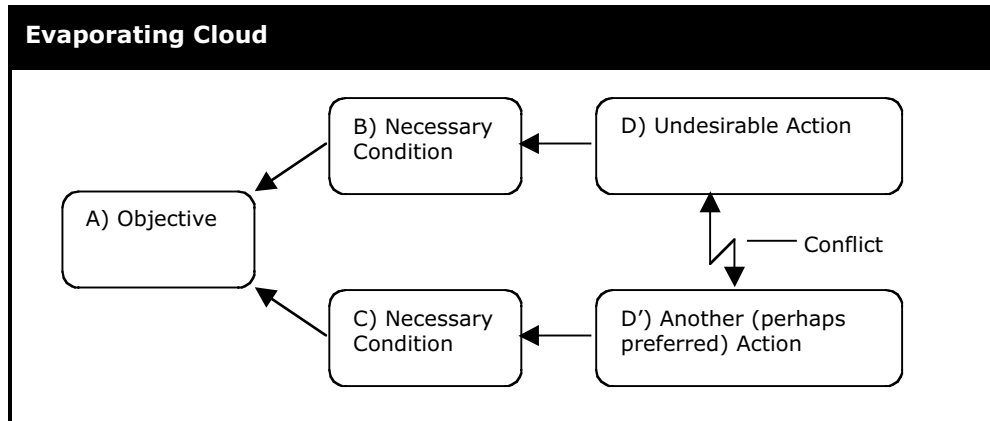
Every member of the team has ideas and opinions about what is wrong with the organization and what is needed to set it on the right road. Those ideas and opinions come from the very real experience they have encountered. The organization is, to some degree, sick (or in some cases, just not quite as fit as it could be). The members of such an organization suffer from symptoms of that infirmity. With historical local focus, it’s probably the symptoms that have gotten the most attention, leaving little time or energy to diagnose and deal with the deeper cause. If the deeper cause isn’t dealt with, the symptoms keep coming back in the form of chronic day-to-day issues and problems. We get to know a lot about the symptoms.

In order to agree on the real problem facing the organization — in order to fully support a particular diagnosis — it must be clear to all members of the team that their most troubling local symptoms are rooted in that problem. If not, then “what’s in it for me” to support and work for its solution will not be clear. That lack of clarity will lead to a lack of buy-in and a lack of whole-hearted support for the resulting solution.

And that makes sense. After all, if it is not a solution for them — if it does not address their symptoms — how can it be a solution for the organization of which they are a part? So their bad experiences, their chronic symptoms, and their regular and repeated fire-fighting exercises associated with the subject at hand must be a piece of the diagnosis if they are expected to support the cure. And for a cure to take, they must support it.

For logical analysis, problems are most productively thought of as dilemmas. Any problem can be stated in terms of a conflict or conflicts between what are perceived to be necessary conditions of the system that's involved. A problem can be described in terms of the sense of being forced to choose between two seemingly necessary but conflicting actions. Along the same lines, one may feel forced to oscillate between or unsatisfactorily compromise between those actions. A problem is most often the result of feeling caught “between a rock and a hard place,” on the “horns of a dilemma,” or even “between the devil and the deep blue sea.” (Such a variety of colorful clichés must have some basis in reality.)

The Thinking Process tool that can help one define a problem is the Evaporating Cloud (the name of which relates to the cloud or fog one can find oneself in when stuck in a dilemma or conflict). For this purpose, the cloud takes on the following necessity logic form:



and is read:

In order to have objective A, we must have necessary condition B.

In order to have necessary condition B, we must take undesirable action D.

In order to have objective A, we must have necessary condition C.

In order to have necessary condition C, we must take action D'.

But actions D and D' are in conflict.

Also known as a conflict cloud, a dilemma cloud, or a conflict resolution diagram, the Evaporating Cloud provides a solvable verbalization of a conflicted situation. Solvable is defined as “win-win” in terms of satisfying the necessary conditions B and C without succumbing to the D-D' conflict.

Experience in the use of this tool has shown that if a group can verbalize the various individual local dilemmas that they face in dealing with both their day-to-day and long-term efforts, the results can go a long way to delivering considerable understanding of their “global, systemic” situation. A group's behavior (its culture as well as its practices) is defined by the accumulation of these dilemmas and how they tend to resolve them.

It may sound strange, but when you look at these dilemmas together, no matter from how dissimilar the original problem statements seem, they tend to exhibit a “fractal” nature in their self-similarity. There is very often (actually almost always) some generic conflict/dilemma of the larger system that they can be translated to — the Core Conflict Cloud (CCC). When this root cause conflict is identified and addressed appropriately, it can lead quickly to a coherent and consistent set of actions (including appropriate training, measures, and policies) that will result in the mitigation, if not elimination, of the various individual issues being faced throughout the organization.

It's one thing to identify a Core Conflict Cloud, but it's another to translate that into “agreement on the problem.” Very often, the Core Conflict Cloud is built from a subset of individual problem clouds. While its mere verbalization can sometimes be enough to get to agreement of the problem, in order to absolutely assure buy-in of those suffering from other symptoms not included in the Core Conflict Cloud process, a clear connection needs to be made from the core conflict to their problems. The “sufficiency logic” — the “if..., then...” cause and effect relationships linking the conflict to the individual problems needs to be built. This is where the second tool — the Current Reality Tree (CRT) comes in.

The CRT is a sufficiency-based logic (if...then...) tool that is used to fully describe an existing situation — the current problematic reality. Its purpose is to understand (to the level of detail necessary for the group to achieve consensus) how the various issues and problems they face are related to each other, to their policies, measurements, and practices and to the generic/root/core conflict identified through the process described above. This understanding is not only invaluable in assuring agreement on the problem, but also provides the guidance for developing a solution, as understanding why situation X leads to an undesirable Y provides guidance for inserting new actions to either replace or modify X or to cause it to result in a favorable Z instead.

The structure of a CRT consists of connected clusters of statements associated with the situation. The connections are “if...then...” or “if...and if...and if...then...” cause and effect relationships. Graphically, they are statements connected by arrows. These clusters are strung together as effects become causes of other effects until the undesirable effects – the original collection of problems – are shown to be effects of the causal core conflict. The CRT has at its base a variant of a core conflict cloud, and higher up in the tree, most if not all of the subject matter's stake holders' symptoms/problems/issues linked in as effects stemming from stuff the root.

A well-built CRT will confirm that your suspect core conflict (or a modification of it) is indeed at the root of the originally identified problems and it will serve as guidance for developing a new view of future reality (vision) to replace the current. It will do so because along the way from core conflict cause to the individual problems, it should contain various policies, measurements, and resulting behaviors that are in response to some aspect of the reality, but are also at the root of the original problems. At least partially, the solution will involve dealing with these dysfunctional practices.

The combination of the core/root/generic conflict (expressed as an Evaporating Cloud) and the confirmation of the CRT linking it to the particular range of issues facing the group will provide “agreement on the (real) problem” and answer the first question that needs to be addressed – *What to change?*

## **Addressing Layer 2 – Lack of direction for a solution – Evaporating the Core Conflict Cloud**

One of the tenets of the Theory of Constraints, reflecting its roots in the application of the techniques associated with scientific method to those “soft sciences” like management and organizational behavior, is that in any system that is brought together for a purpose, there is no such thing as real conflict, but only unexamined assumptions. The cloud allows a clear statement of the perceived dilemma and provides a route for the surfacing and scrutiny of those assumptions.

Under every arrow (including the conflict arrow between D and D') lie assumptions. Brainstorming those assumptions is a matter of reading the “in order to, we must” statements, and then adding the word “because...” to it, soliciting reasons why A requires B or C requires D', or why D and D' are mutually exclusive. Once the assumptions are sufficiently spelled out, it's a matter of finding one that seems susceptible to questioning -- a chink in the armor of the conflict.

If stuck on the proverbial desert island of problem solving, the Evaporating Cloud process is a major candidate for the tool to take along, because at the core of almost any problem or decision (either minute and personal or broad and strategic) that one faces is the dilemma of doing one thing or another, pursuing one direction or another, going for D or for D', even when its as simple as doing something or doing nothing. The cloud tells you that there really isn't a choice involved at all; it's only a matter of examining the assumptions that make you think there is a choice.

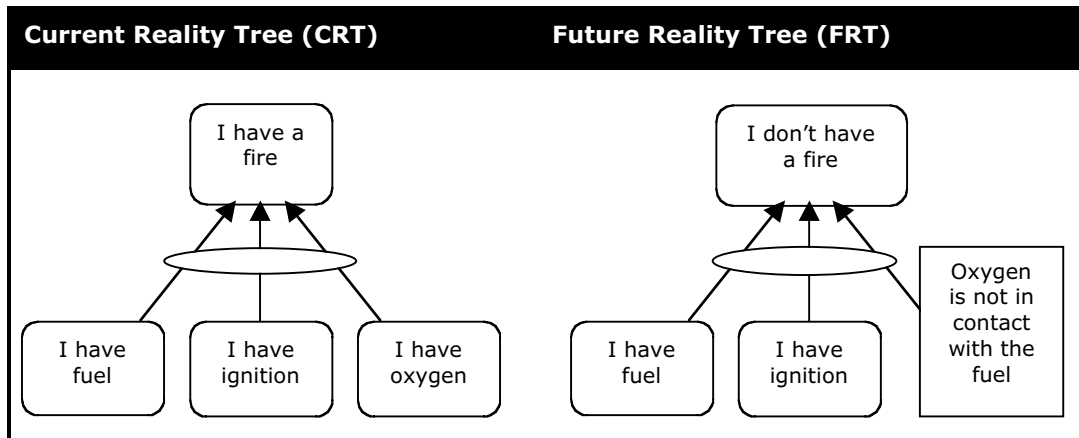
While this process of assumption raising and replacement can be applied to any conflict cloud, including those associated with the original list of individual problems to come up with a potential solution at the local level, what we are trying to is solve a variety of issues by attacking the deeper conflict coloring the actions and reactions of the larger organizational system. The replacement of at least one of the assumptions perpetuating the Core Conflict Cloud provides the starting point – the direction – for a deeply rooted and therefore powerful, holistic solution to the original diverse problem set.

Using the Evaporating Cloud process to create a powerful first step for a solution can be either an individual or group effort. The straightforward documentation of the cloud, the identified assumptions, and the idea that is injected into this situation and becomes the direction for the solution provides a clear, easily scrutinized communication tool to bring others into agreement on the direction or to offer modifications that will lead to that agreement. Breaking this conflict gets us past layer 2 providing us with the basis for agreement on a direction for the solution.

### Addressing Layer 3 – Lack of agreement that the solution will truly address the problem – The Future Reality Tree (FRT)

As the names suggest, the Future Reality Tree is similar to the Current Reality Tree in structure, but with new proposed actions, policies, and behaviors injected into it to create a vision of the “future reality” of the system that can be logically demonstrated.

The power of the “if..., then...” sufficiency logic construction is that if any one of the lower-level causes are removed or mitigated, everything that is above it is subject to change. If you can develop various “injections” as new causes, then you can, through restatements of the subsequent logic, predict and direct changes to the resultant effects. A simple example of how sufficiency logic works is:



If any one of the three “ifs” or causes of this sample Current Reality Tree are removed or modified, the “then” or effect (the fire) may be removed from consideration as a problem. We might choose to develop a system in which fuel and sources of ignition are isolated from one another to prevent fires. Or if the problem is that a fire exists, we may choose to remove the oxygen by covering the fire with water, CO<sub>2</sub>, or a blanket. These are all possible injections. (If only all the “fire-fighting” we do were so clear-cut! But maybe it can be almost so.) Even in more complex real-life issues, a careful analysis of assumptions, which in this kind of construction become more “ifs” arrowed into the “then,” which become more possible sources for things to remove by the “injection” of new actions, policies, or behaviors.

When the CRT is based in a core conflict, the initial injection comes from the “out-of-the-5-sided-box” solution of that conflict -- the idea that stems from addressing questionable assumptions. Additional injections (including new policies and measurements) are developed to flesh out the elimination of the original problems and their replacement with new desirable effects. As in the raising of assumptions in the Evaporating Cloud process, analysis of sufficiency logic can be performed by adding the word “because...” to the “if..., then...” verbalization of the logical links in question. Doing so will help to trigger additional, unstated causal assumptions that will provide additional opportunities for changing the predicted negative outcome.

(Note: Some “systems-thinking” aficionados may see, in this process, similarities to causal loops. Indeed, complete Current and Future Reality Trees for complex systems do often contain loops of causality. In CRTs, these loops most often serve to perpetuate undesirable stuff. In well-designed FRTs, loops will be consciously looked for and strengthened so that they will contribute to getting more and more of the desired outcomes.)

The objective of the Future Reality Tree is to construct and communicate a strategy – a vision of how to change the undesirable effects found in the CRT to desirable effects and to lay the groundwork for addressing higher-level strategic objectives. Again, like the CRT, building an FRT is best done by individuals or by very small groups, while the most effective use of group interaction (and that gains from experienced facilitation) is in scrutiny, clarification, and completion of the solution. The clear, easily interpreted and scrutinized “if..., then...” logic lends itself to open dialogue on the subject, and if presented as such, with a willingness to modify and augment as potential collaborators add additional knowledge and perceptions, is highly useful for getting agreement that the solution will address the problem and its undesirable effects.

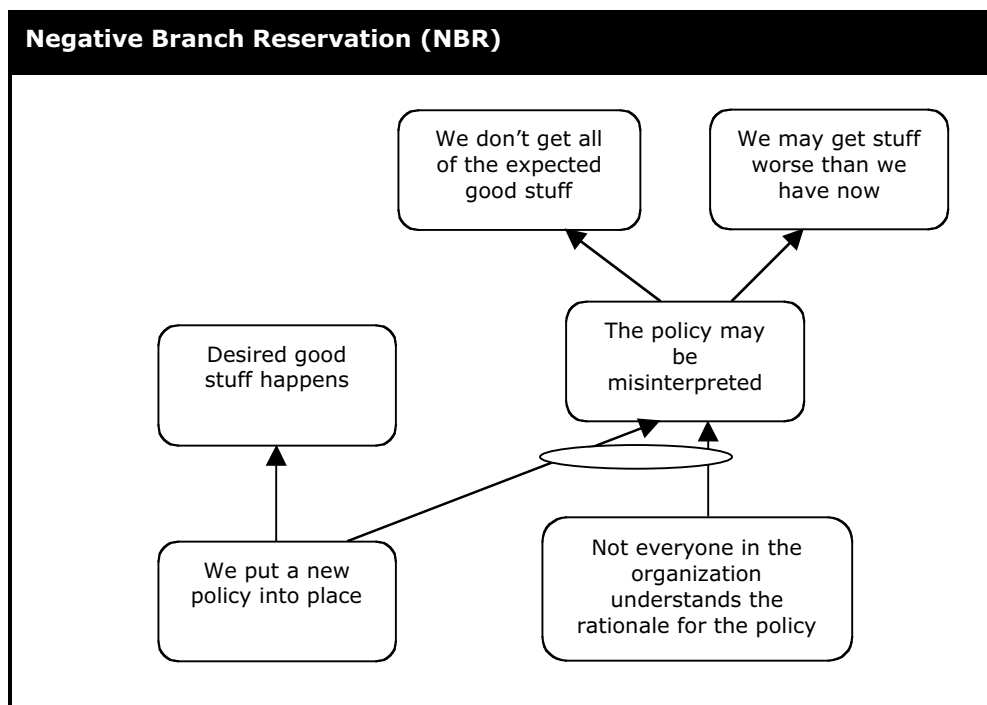
## Addressing Layer 4 – Concern that the solution will lead to new undesirable side effects – The Negative Branch Reservation (NBR)

While the various Thinking Processes thus far outlined can be used for the construction of a solution strategy, once identified, that strategy needs to be communicated to others for their buy-in. Using the same tools for initial discussion of the proposal will help get through the first three layers of resistance, as described above. Presenting the proposal in the form of a Future Reality Tree provides enough detailed information to allow open scrutiny of that strategy.

When a proposal to solve a problem is offered by a member of a group, whether in the form of a seemingly complete Future Reality Tree or in the form of a standalone idea thrown out on the table, there are frequently concerns or reservations raised on the part of other members of the group. In the lingo of the Thinking Processes, a RESERVATION exists that if we act on an injection in the Future Reality TREE, there will result a BRANCH in that reality that leads to a new, undesirable, NEGATIVE result – a undesirable side-effect of the solution; hence, the “Negative Branch Reservation” or NBR.

An NBR is essentially a mini-Current Reality Tree, rooted in a particular aspect of the proposal and logically demonstrating through “if..., then...” cause-and-effect logic, why the concern – the new undesirable effect will result. The key to “trimming the negative branch” again lies in the conversion of internalized intuition into logical steps that can be rationally discussed while avoiding the feeling of “constructive criticism” or more blatant “pot-shots” aimed at the proposal.

The “if..., then...” connections must link the proposed action with the suspected negative outcome. We can then again apply assumption searches to the arrows, especially those that are merging arrows, not directly related to the initial proposal, in order to find a new injection - a new idea, arrowed into the logic, that will change the outcome of concern. In the following example, it is determined that by instituting a new policy, we will be able to achieve something good for the organization.



In this simple negative branch, it's easy to see that to complete the solution, i.e., to get not only the desired good stuff, but to avoid the possible negative consequences of our action we might want to replace the lack of understanding of the policy with another action involving education and explanation of the purpose of the policy, perhaps with even new systems of measurements that support the new policy. By doing so, we avoid the possible misinterpretation and subsequent bad stuff.

In terms of group accomplishment, the NBRs brought up by group members serve to complete the solution developed in a Future Reality Tree. To this end, it behooves the proponent of a solution to swallow his or her pride of authorship and actively solicit concerns or even reasons we shouldn't implement the proposal as stated. If they're not identified, they can't be dealt with. If they're not dealt with, they could jeopardize the entire initiative. In this mindset, the concerns no longer fall under the category of criticism (constructive or otherwise), but instead serve to complete the solution.

From a buy-in perspective, it also offers an additional powerful benefit. It provides a route to buy-in for participants as their contribution to the solution (in the form of actions required to trim their NBRs) gives them a sense of ownership of (at least part of) the overall solution. Actually, even if starting with a single proposal without a pre-prepared FRT, the identification and solution of NBRs could result in an FRT built on that proposal as open and unguarded discussion of concerns builds upon it.

Once the Layer 4 concerns of the buy-in targets are dealt with through the trimming of Negative Branch Reservations, adding the solutions of the NBRs to the FRT completes the answer to the objective of determining *to what to change to*.

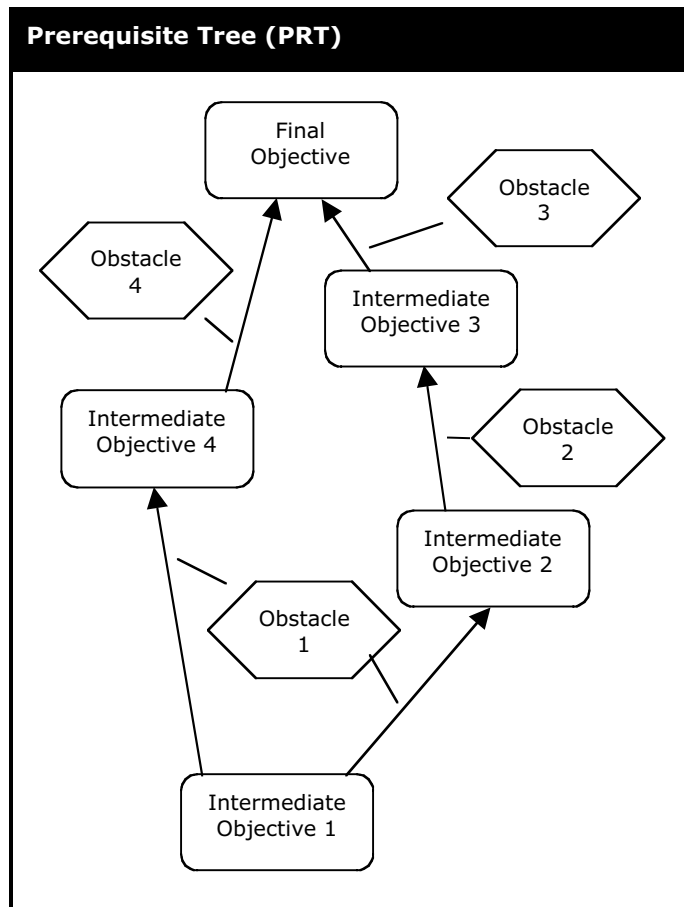
### Addressing Layer 5 – Lack of a clear path around obstacles to the solution – The Prerequisite Tree (PRT) and Transition Tree (TT)

OK. We now have an agreed upon solution defined in terms of a vision and the strategy that should achieve it without succumbing to negative side effects (the complete Future Reality Tree, augmented by the added injections to trim Negative Branches), but we also have a whole pile of stuff blocking us from implementing this part or that part of the strategy. Indeed, for some of the things we've identified as injections in the FRT, we may have only a sketchy idea of how to make them happen.

The Prerequisite Tree (PRT) is an excellent group process that takes advantage of people's natural propensity and ability to point out why something can't get done. The first step in building a PRT (after clearly stating the team's ambitious objective) is to collect all the obstacles that the group can come up with. Then, each individual who raised an obstacle identifies an "intermediate objective" (IO) that would overcome it or make it moot. (After all, the person who comes up with an obstacle probably has the most intuition about what it would take to address it.) These IOs are not actions, but rather states, that, if they existed, would deal with the obstacle. Think of them as milestones in an implementation plan as opposed to the actions or tasks that get us to the milestones.

Once all the Intermediate Objectives are identified, the obstacles are used to sequence the IOs into a network that becomes the plan to achieve the objective. This is a straightforward process of going down the list of IOs and assessing whether any of the other identified obstacles stand in the way of making them happen. Once sequenced, team effort can then be focused appropriately, since the network points the group to start on those IOs that don't depend on others, and only when they are done, they know they can move on to the next because they've overcome an obstacle that was blocking them.

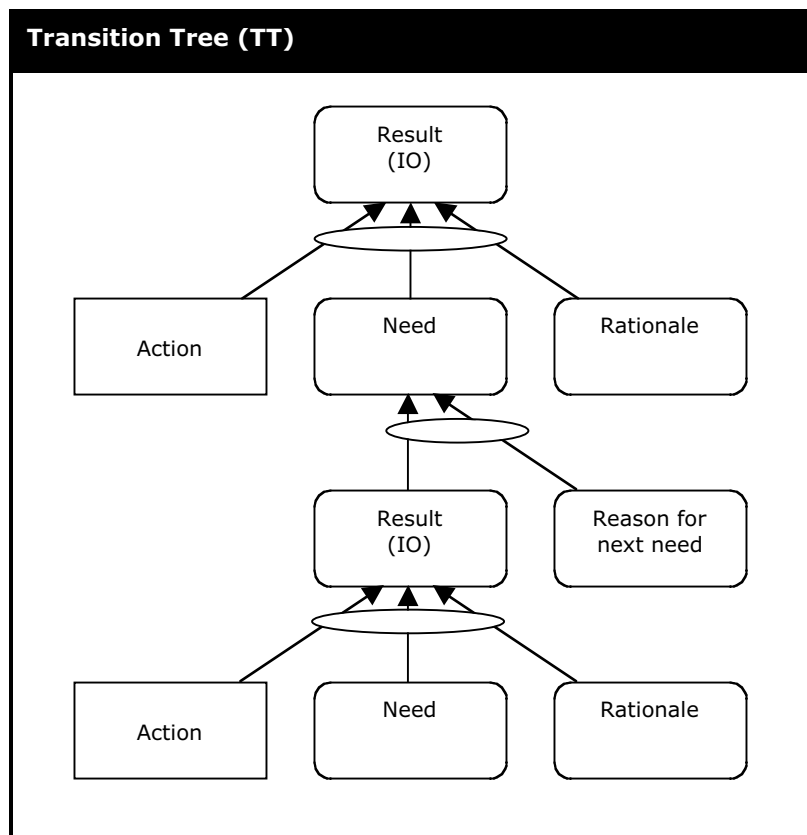
If the question is how to eat an elephant, the answer



is “one bite at a time.” The PRT is a painless way of identifying which “bites of the elephant” we’ll gnaw on first in our attempt to consume the whole thing. As a group effort, this process benefits (as does the solicitation of NBRs as reasons we shouldn’t take a particular path of action) from the diverse and divergent views of the group’s members. The more obstacles that are raised, the more complete the implementation plan of *how to make the change happen* will be, resulting in fewer surprises along the way.

The last Thinking Process tool – the Transition Tree (TT) – further supports the need to describe *how to make the change happen*. Sometimes getting from one Intermediate Objective in a Prerequisite Tree to another requires a finer level of detail in terms of defined actions and results. The Transition Tree is a communication and empowerment tool, allowing one to follow a path of action with clear understanding of what to expect along the way and why to expect it.

It is a simple repetitive sufficiency logic construct that puts the actions/tasks in context with the objectives. Once again, based on simple, “if..., then...” links, the Transition Tree includes the need for action, the action, the rationale for the action (why we expect the action to provide the desired result), that desired, expected result (which may be an intermediate objective – an IO), and then reason for the next need in a graphical format.



The transition tree includes all the information you need to build a detailed action plan, assess its ability to deliver results, and includes those results to allow development of alternative actions – a real “results-oriented” task list that encourages “empowerment” to offer new solutions. It sure beats a simple “Do this, then do that, then...” list of tasks that we usually get for instructions.

The combination of the Prerequisite Tree, providing the overarching shape of an implementation plan, and the Transition Tree, detailing actions and expected results necessary to achieve that plan provide a clear path over, under, around, or through the obstacles that are seen to be blocking the change.

## **Addressing Layer 6 – Lack of follow-through even after agreement to proceed with the solution (due to un verbalized fear or concerns)**

The vast majority of sources of resistance can be dealt with by moving through the first five layers as fully as possible, aided by the TOC Thinking Processes. Sometimes, however, despite the best efforts at soliciting concerns or obstacles, unstated fears about the change may remain. For example, it might be embarrassing, or impolitic, to oppose a change due to a fear of losing status or responsibility. Another could be a residual concern from previous attempts at change – the sense that his will be “just another initiative du jour.” The result of either response could be lip service, or foot dragging.

The best way around Layer 6 is effective leadership and management of the implementation. Demonstrating faith in the plan and consistency in walking the talk through implementation of the new policies needed to achieve the desired effects will go a long way to proving that this effort is for real. Another way to confirm that the implementation is moving ahead in a timely fashion is the use the Prerequisite and Transition Trees as the basis for a project network against which effective project management scheduling and tracking processes can be applied. Accountability for actions and IOs and follow-up on their completion will help to identify any “dragging feet.”

Finally, while there is no Thinking Process tool explicitly designed to address Layer 6 issues, the combination of the Negative Branch Reservation and an intuitive management team may actually help to identify issues like status loss without the embarrassment of the person involved having to bring it up him or herself.

## **Summary – Layers of Resistance and Thinking Process tools to deal with them**

What to change?

The Core Conflict Cloud Process and Current Reality Tree link diverse undesirable effects to root causes or conflicts that are the most efficient/effective things to attack. What to change becomes the logically demonstrated and agreed upon source of problems. (Layer 1)

To what to change to?

The Evaporating Cloud identifies an out-of-the-box starting point – a direction for the solution (Layer 2). The Future Reality Tree fleshes out the complete solution – the complete strategy for turning the collection of local undesirable effects into desirable outcomes (Layer 3). Finally, the Negative Branch Reservation completes that strategy/vision by adding things needed to avoid unintended negative consequences (Layer 4).

How to make the change happen?

The Prerequisite Tree turns obstacles into an implementation plan so that ambitious outcomes can be achieved. The building of a plan as a group, based on individual input of foreseen obstacles, allows the team to become synchronized in its understanding of the task ahead of them and how their parts fit in to the whole. The Transition Tree (when necessary) gets into deeper levels of detail for paths of action, relating them to expected outcomes along the way (Layer 5).

The TOC Thinking Processes, addressing the six layers of resistance, help link the three questions into a seamless process to assure complete construction, coherent communication and collaborative co-ownership for truly meaningful and powerful improvements.

Biographical Sketch: Francis S. “Frank” Patrick (fpatrik@focusedperformance.com) is founder and principal consultant of Focused Performance, a management consulting and training resource concentrating in helping organizations discover and unleash new capacity and capabilities through the application of the Theory of Constraints. An associate of the A.Y.Goldratt Institute, Frank’s recognized expertise in TOC builds upon and focuses his almost 30 years of Industrial Engineering, Project Management, and TQM experience for maximum benefit for clients and associates.