

Imagine!



I am sure that many of you watched the football games over the past few days and maybe some of you also watched the Rose Bowl Parade in Pasadena. You may have been amazed at the many ways people can arrange flowers, but did you pay attention to the theme for the parade? And some of the floats which attempted to support the general theme?

The theme for the parade was "Just Imagine" and many floats echoed that theme, including one from Farmers Insurance titled "Unimaginable" and another from La Canada Flint Ridge called "If Pigs Could Fly". Isn't imagining things fun? Don't you remember doing it as a kid? Why don't you do it now? I'll bet, in most cases, that the first thing that pops into your head is all the reasons you can't do the impossible, achieve all that's needed, the resources you don't have, what you are "allowed" to do, and many others.

When did this transition happen for you? At what age? Why? During the holidays, we had the pleasure of visiting with two of our grandchildren, both young girls, 4 and 6 and I marveled at all their "pretend" activities, especially around their dolls being sick and treating them "magically" with all kinds of imagined tools. I can't remember the last time I saw that kind of behavior in an adult over 30.

What does all of this have to do with innovation and more specifically, the TRIZ process that we use? Well, if you remember, the first thing we do is to generalize a problem and see if someone else has already solved it in a general sense. This requires us to generalize the problem. This is surprisingly difficult for adults and specifically focused technology people to do. It takes some imagination and out of the box thinking to do even this first step.

Then, the first step in the formal TRIZ process is to write down and specifically define the "Ideal Final Result". Here's where we run into some real psychological barriers. It's really hard to "imagine" something more profound than a 20% improvement. It's hard to "imagine" the problem disappearing, the resources you need all of a sudden appearing, the contradictions you need to overcome being resolved, etc. But if you don't make this first bold step, you will never achieve true breakthrough innovation.

Your resolution challenge for the New Year, is to NEVER start a project without clearly stating what the IDEAL result is that you want.

Next public TRIZ class is in Houston, March 5-7:

<http://www.asme.org/products/courses/triz--the-theory-of-inventive-problem-solving>