

## **Letter to the Editor: On professions and professional behaviours**

**By Graham Rawlinson, C.Psychol.**

Visiting Research Fellow, Dept. of Informatics, Sussex University  
graham@dagr.demon.co.uk

First, I wish to thank all those organising a great TRIZ conference in Seattle, especially those who organised the weather so well! And Boeing for hosting and supporting us all so well.

My purpose in writing however is a reflection, some thinking,

### ***First:***

About the views so often stated at TRIZCON, that TRIZ is better than the unrepeatable and unpredictable psychological methods for idea generation and evaluation,

### ***And second:***

About the difficulty of embedding TRIZ into a large company.

### **‘Psychological methods vs TRIZ’**

As a chartered psychologist committed to TRIZ for 8 years now, as a former consultant with Synectic s™, as a former Director of Enterprise at a University in which my role was to help develop new curricula and teaching methods, I would like to reflect on comments about ‘psychological methods’.

The common statement about the unrepeatability of psychological methods should perhaps be put in the context of the reality that often those ‘psychological methods’ are not being used by psychologists but people who have read a few books on psychology. It is a little like someone who has read Popular Science magazines for a few years, picks up an article on Axiomatic Design and then proceeds to teach it. If you get unpredictable results from the use of these methods then maybe you have not employed people who are fully trained in those approaches and fully trained to teach those processes.

One of those ‘Psychological Methods’ is Synectics™ which has a full ‘train the trainer’ programme which is very extensive (including videoed sessions reviewed with you as an individual trainer by two reviewers – it is harder than a PhD Viva I promise you) and very costly (but very worthwhile). Synectics is a ‘Psychological Method’ in that it was derived from observing people being creative rather than innovative solutions. However, most companies send someone on one or two Synectics™ courses and then ask them to provide internal training and facilitation for staff. These people are neither trained to train nor trained to facilitate. If you get unpredictable results, that may explain it. Synectics™ training was in the use of the tools and the more general facilitation skills for handling creative sessions. Which leads to my next point.

### **Embedding TRIZ**

An issue raised again and again at TRIZCON is how to embed TRIZ in big companies. There are many experienced users of TRIZ in the community at large, but without proper professional training in how to teach/train/help people to learn, can we

really expect the best results? Can we really expect people to succeed in one of the most critical areas of a business, how to Innovate, when there is so little training in facilitation, despite the existence of a very professional organisation called the International Association of Facilitators who would be happy to offer trainers to train people leading to accreditation as a facilitator.

A short snippet from the IAF web group: "I was in a workshop once where we were asked to refrain from speaking for as long as possible, and to pay attention to what the urge to speak feels like (not emotionally, but in bodily sensations), and to what we are feeling just as the urge becomes unbearable and we have to release that feeling by speaking."

Unreliable 'psychological' process, maybe. Worth doing? Probably!

Some more: "Anyway, I suspect that the urge to advocate /feels/ different from the urge to inquire, that both feel different from the urge to listen fully, and that becoming aware of those feelings may be instructive.". Some will see resemblances to my comments on good teaching in my session about Thinking about Thinking about Thinking.

In my session at TRIZCON2004 we talked about the 'purpose' of a company, and as we know getting purpose, or function right is key to good problem solving and innovation. Again, from the IAF group we have the wisdom (my view of course):

"If we equate an organization to a car, we can say a car needs gasoline to run, but does it exist for gasoline? Organizations, like cars, need profit/shareholder value to run, but they don't exist for that purpose. They exist, like a car, to provide some service (like a car's purpose is to provide transportation) to customers, employees, and society as a whole."

Facilitators may have a looser approach to ideas sessions than TRIZ folk, but they also bring professional group handling approaches which we could all learn from.

I am not suggesting that everyone has to be accredited facilitators to deliver an innovative session, but I am suggesting that if a strategic decision is taken to embed TRIZ in an organisation then consideration should be given to the level of skills of people as facilitators as well as TRIZ knowledge.

### **Managing Change**

Negative marketing is questioned by professional psychologists who will tell you that you are associating your product with the negative. So let's not glibly condemn others. Let's come alongside those who have different approaches, let's value what they bring and they are more likely to value what we bring with TRIZ.

To manage change in an organisation we need a spread of skills, a diversity of views, an attitude of seeing positive opportunities arising from a spectrum of professional approaches, surely?

Some post conference thoughts by Graham

All comments welcome.

Further reading: People might like to review some other approaches to Creativity and for this a two day event in London hosted by the UK Royal Society (the most prestigious Science Institution in the UK) on “The Science of Well Being” is recommended. Interesting papers are from Dr Barbara Fredrickson (University of Michigan) and Professor Martin Seligman (University of Pennsylvania). A precis of this event will appear shortly at [www.royalsoc.ac.uk](http://www.royalsoc.ac.uk) or the full papers will be published in Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society.