



Insights into handling people's Yes, But...

by Jelena Fedurko-Cohen

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About the presenter

I have been extremely lucky and privileged to think and work with outstanding thinkers in linguistics, semantics, learning, communication, and TOC. Thinking with thinkers means intensive asking and being asked, agreeing and disagreeing, and being agreed and disagreed with, challenging and being challenged, being invited to see their thinking paths and showing mine. It has been a rare and precious gift that has brought me to be very conscious about thinking.

Not less have I received from everyone I have taught and consulted. It is helping them see and work their way through TOC logical tools that continuously helps me develop the HOW to use the tools. My fifth book on TP – Engineering Managerial Solutions – will be published within a few weeks and in a way it will fill in a missing link between the series Behind the Cloud – Through Clouds to Solutions – Mistakes and Difficulties in Working with TOC Logical Tools and A Good Strategy & Tactic Tree.

I so much agree with Ted Hutchin about living life in crescendo! I only think that what we once were is not behind, it is what crescendo is building up on.



About this webinar

In TOC the phrase ‘Yes, but...’ is routinely linked to the Layers of Resistance – the most used TOC approach to handle the process of change. In the webinar we will discuss:

- the common confusion between Yes, but... that introduces a perceived potential outcome (Layer 4) and Yes, but... that introduces an obstacle (Layer 5);
- how to recognize from the response whether the person is concerned about the potential negative outcome or an obstacle;
- how to recognize whether the reservation is Layer 4 or 5 or only sounds as Layer 4 or 5 (while disguising Layer 2 – direction of the solution);
- the difference between an obstacle and an UDE;
- the difference between resistance and disagreement;
- the common mistake of labeling Categories of Legitimate Reservations as ‘resistance’ or ‘conflict’.



“Yes” and “But”

- “Yes” indicates that a person **agrees** to what was offered (even if it was just a point of view or position of the other person).
- “But” **erases** what was said before.
- The meaning of the COMBINATION “Yes, But” is to indicate that a person has **NOT A FULL AGREEMENT** to what was offered and raises a **reservation** either to
 - what was an **EXPLICIT** part of what was said, or
 - what a person **ASSUMES** was **implied** by what was said, or
 - what the offer **MAY bring** , and which was NOT (fully) addressed in the offer itself



“Yes, But...”

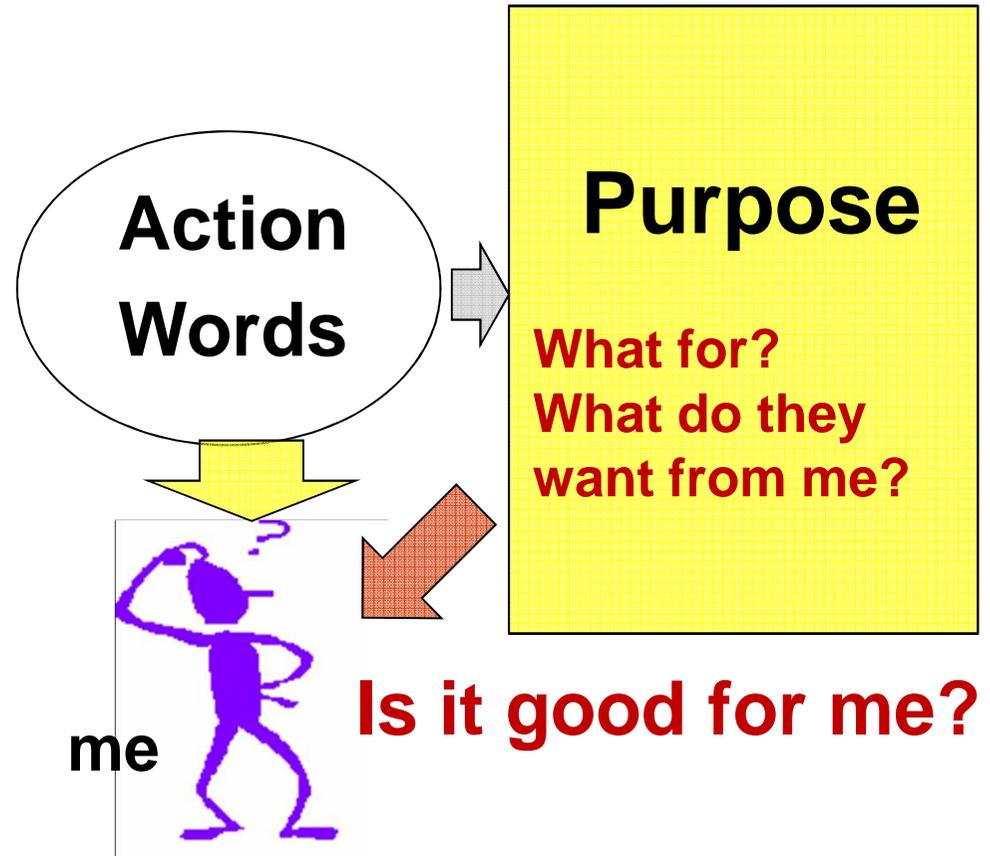
- “BUT” is not the only signal to indicate only a partial agreement:
 - ‘at the same time’, ‘however’, ‘on the other hand’, ‘though’, ‘although’, ‘still’, ‘yet’, ‘nevertheless’
- “But” and its synonyms give a clear signal, that what was offered has been
 - EVALUATED and
 - a CONCLUSION WAS MADE about ACCEPTABILITY of what was offered (or what was assumed what was offered)

Actually, when we hear something directed to us, we ALWAYS do an assessment of acceptability, even when the statement is not an explicit suggestion or request.



What do they want from me?

- When actions/words are directed towards us – for all practical reasons we want to understand: **WHAT IS THE PERSON TRYING TO MAKE US DO?**
- In other words, consciously or subconsciously we are trying to understand what was the **PURPOSE** of what was said or done to us.





Traditionally in TOC “Yes, But...” is linked to the Layers of Resistance to Change

1. Disagreement on what the problem is
2. Disagreement with the direction of solution
3. Disagreement that the solution will bring the desired benefits

Yes, but...

4. Fear that the solution will result in negative consequences (Risks)
5. Obstacles to implementation seem to be impossible to overcome

6. Say “Yes” and do nothing

Application of the TOC
Thinking Processes



“Yes, But...” in another list – 9 Layers of Resistance

JELENA’S COMMENTS:

0: “There is no problem”

0: “There is no problem” → We need to distinguish whether it is Resistance or the **Category of Legitimate Reservation (CLR)** “Entity Existence”

1: Disagreement on the problem

2: The problem is out of my control

2: “The problem is out of my control” is the disagreement that something can be done about the problem → it is announcing a huge obstacle to implement a solution that has been announced. Again, we need to distinguish between “Resistance” and CLR

3: Disagreement on the direction of the solution

4: Disagreement on the details of the solution

4: This requires having a clear distinction of the border between the “direction” and the “details”

5: **Yes, but...**the solution has negative ramification(s)

6: **Yes, but...**we can’t implement the solution

6: “we can’t implement’ means there are obstacles that we are aware of

7: Disagreement on the details of the implementation

7: “Details of implementation” is HOW – which is a part of solution (details)

8: You know the solution holds risk

8: “You know the solution holds risk” is perceived Negative Ramifications



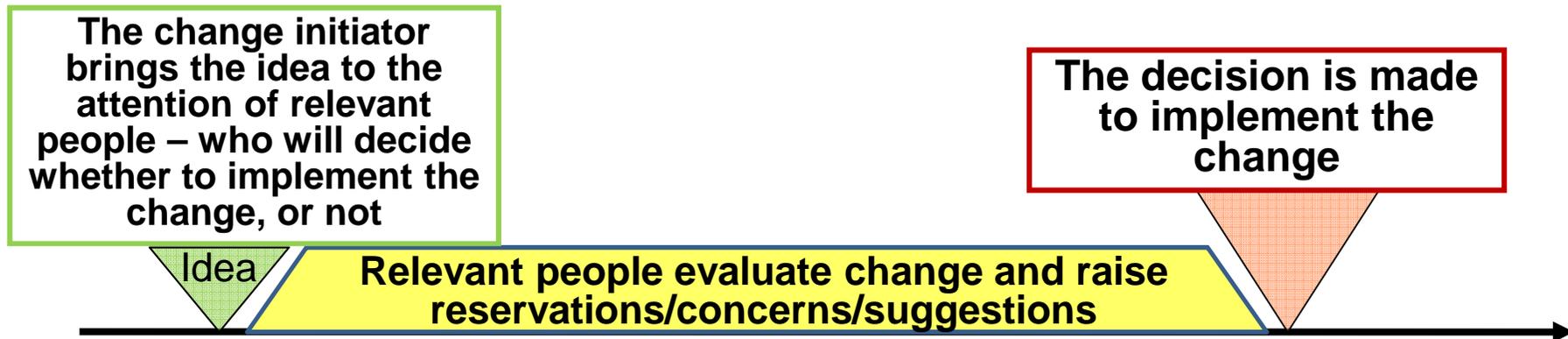
**If you meet RESISTANCE,
it means that**

**YOU HAVE ALREADY OFFERED
YOUR SOLUTION**



The use of TP tools seems to be pretty straightforward when working with Layers of Resistance

The pre-decision stage



The post-decision stage

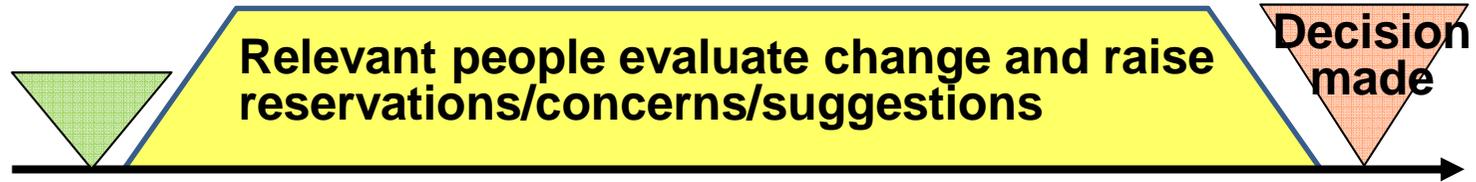




Steps of the TOC process:

Relevant tools and knowledge:

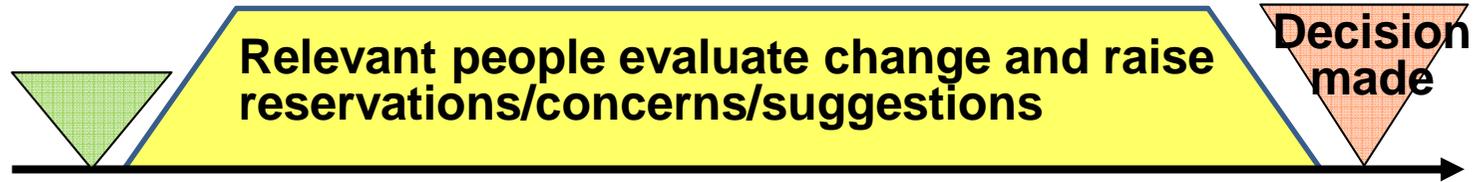
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<p>2. Reaching agreement on the direction of the solution (the suggested change).</p> <p>3. Reaching agreement that the change will bring tangible benefits.</p>	
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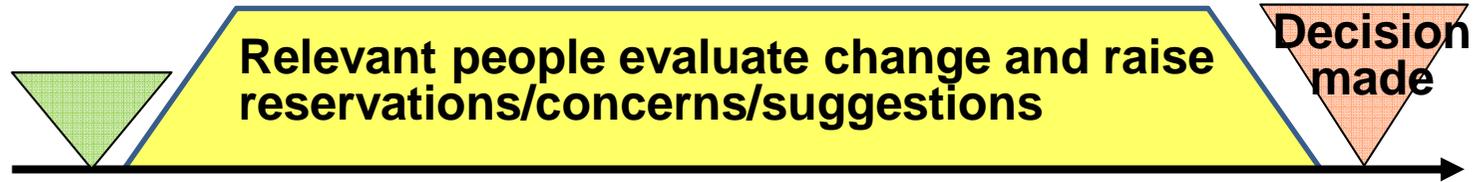
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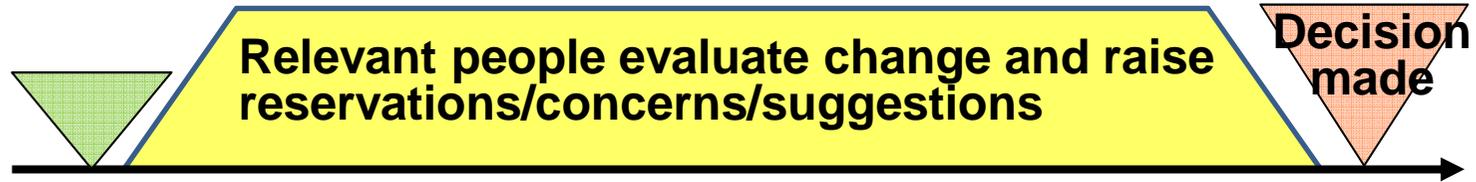
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YES, BUT



NBR or obstacle?

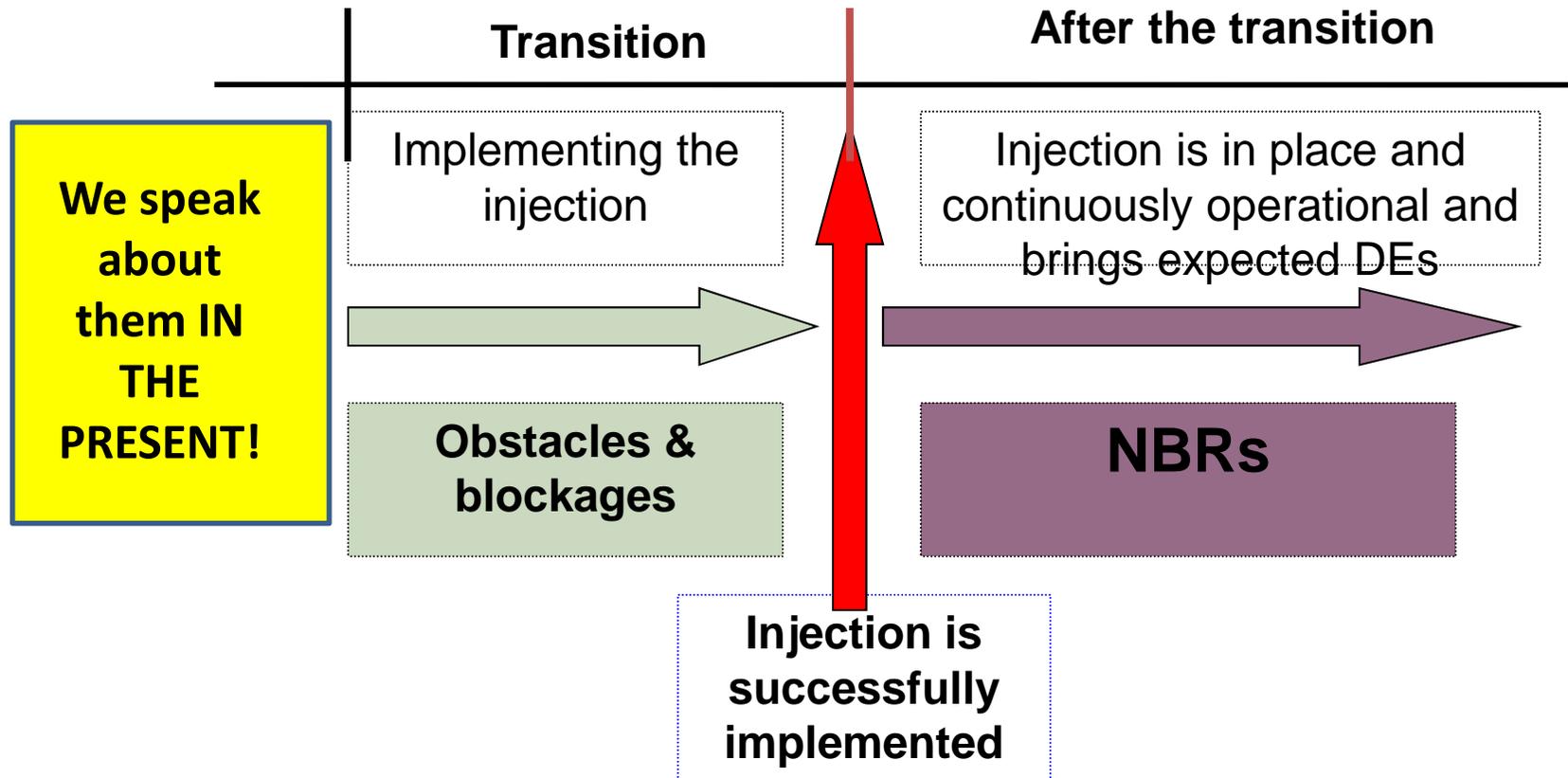
- The main confusion about the meaning of Yes, But... is whether it indicates a potential negative outcome (NBR) or an obstacle
- The difference is meaningful – as the tools and responses to use to deal with NBR and an obstacle are completely different:
 - To deal with a potential negative outcome we use an NBR
 - To deal with an obstacle we use Intermediate Objectives, and the Prerequisite Tree (achieving Ambitious Target)

It is a practical question – which tool to use?



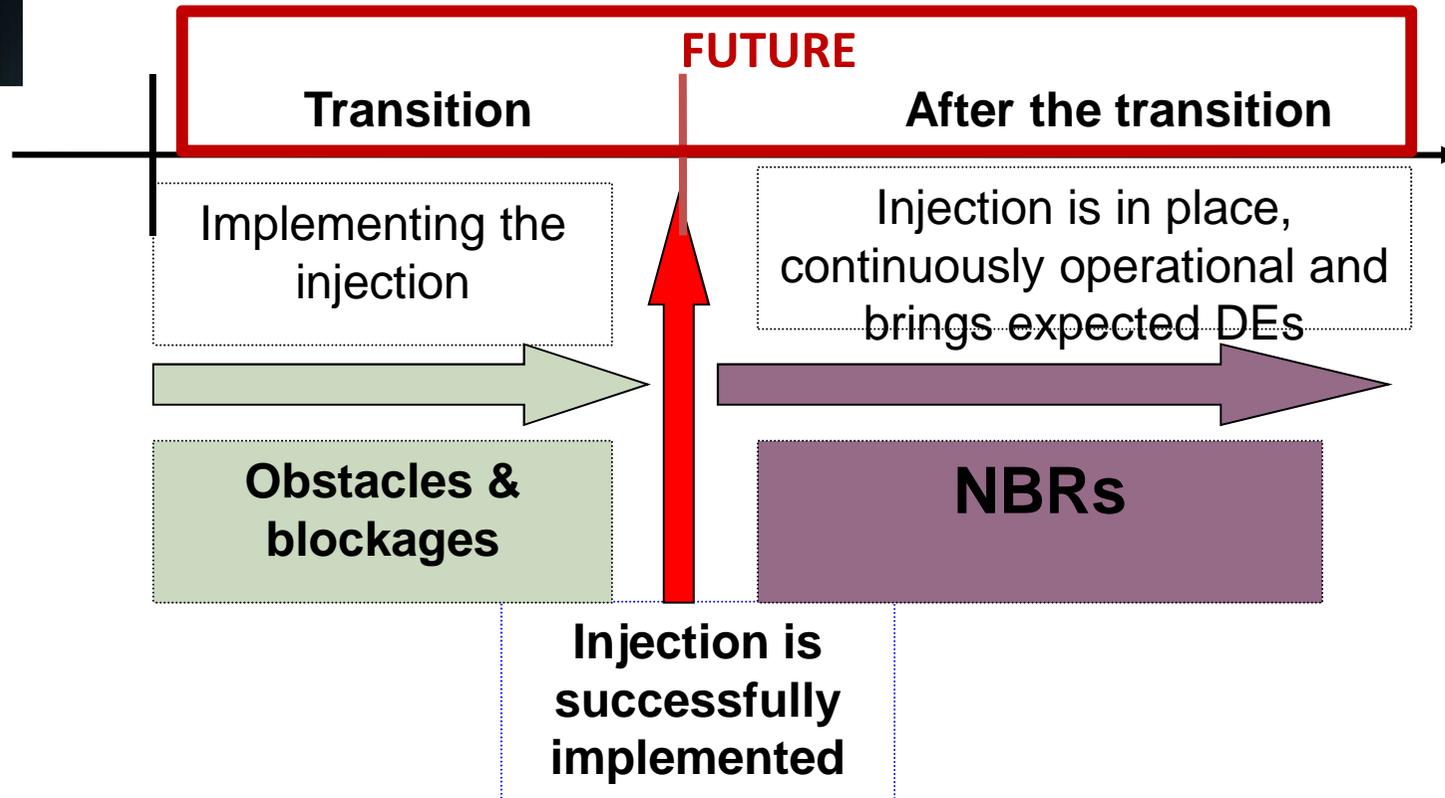
When does an obstacle happen and when does an NBR happen?

Time line of implementing an **Injection**





Confusion: NBR or obstacle?

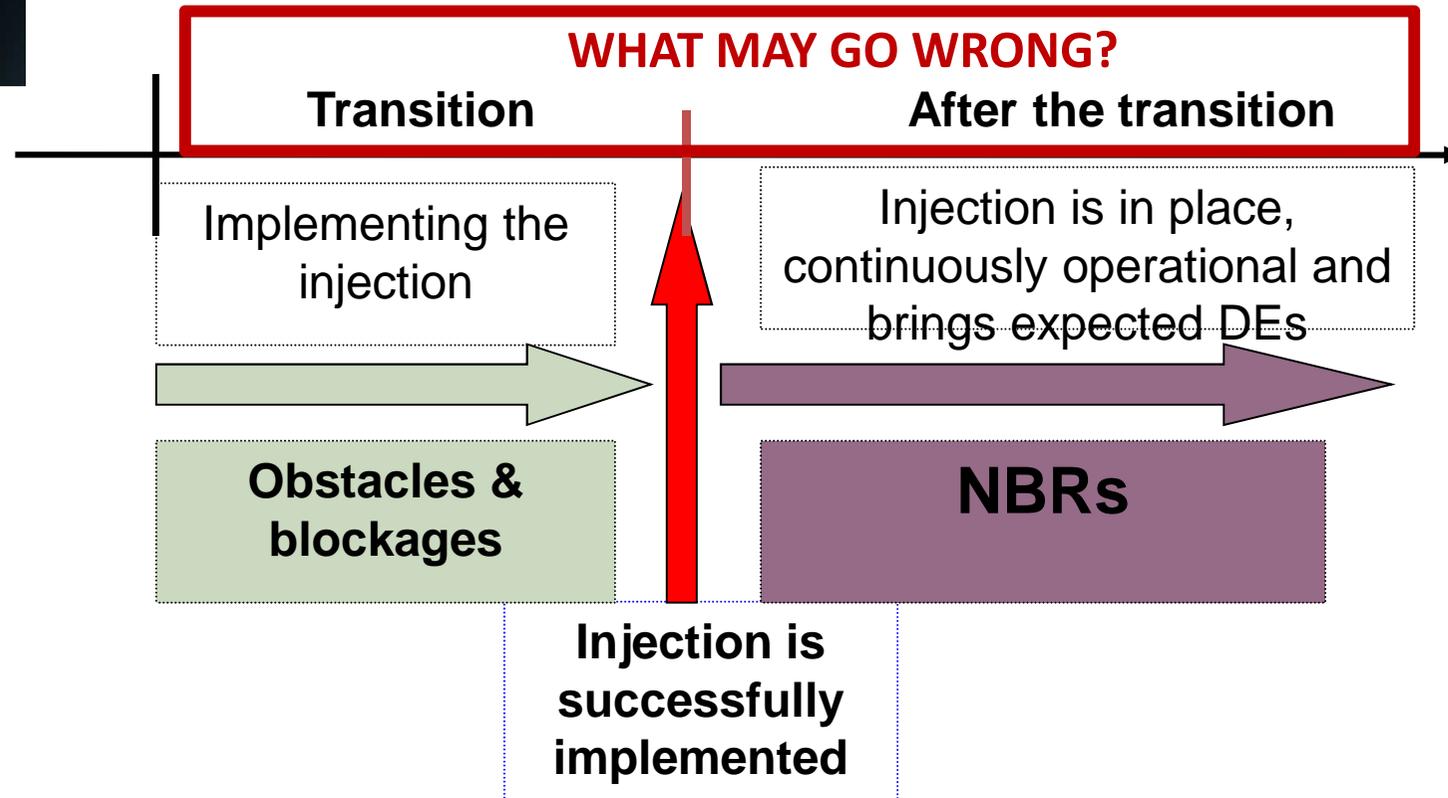


Why does this confusion happen?

- We think and speak about them in the present, and categorize them both as 'a future event', and this is correct – they **both (may) happen in the future**



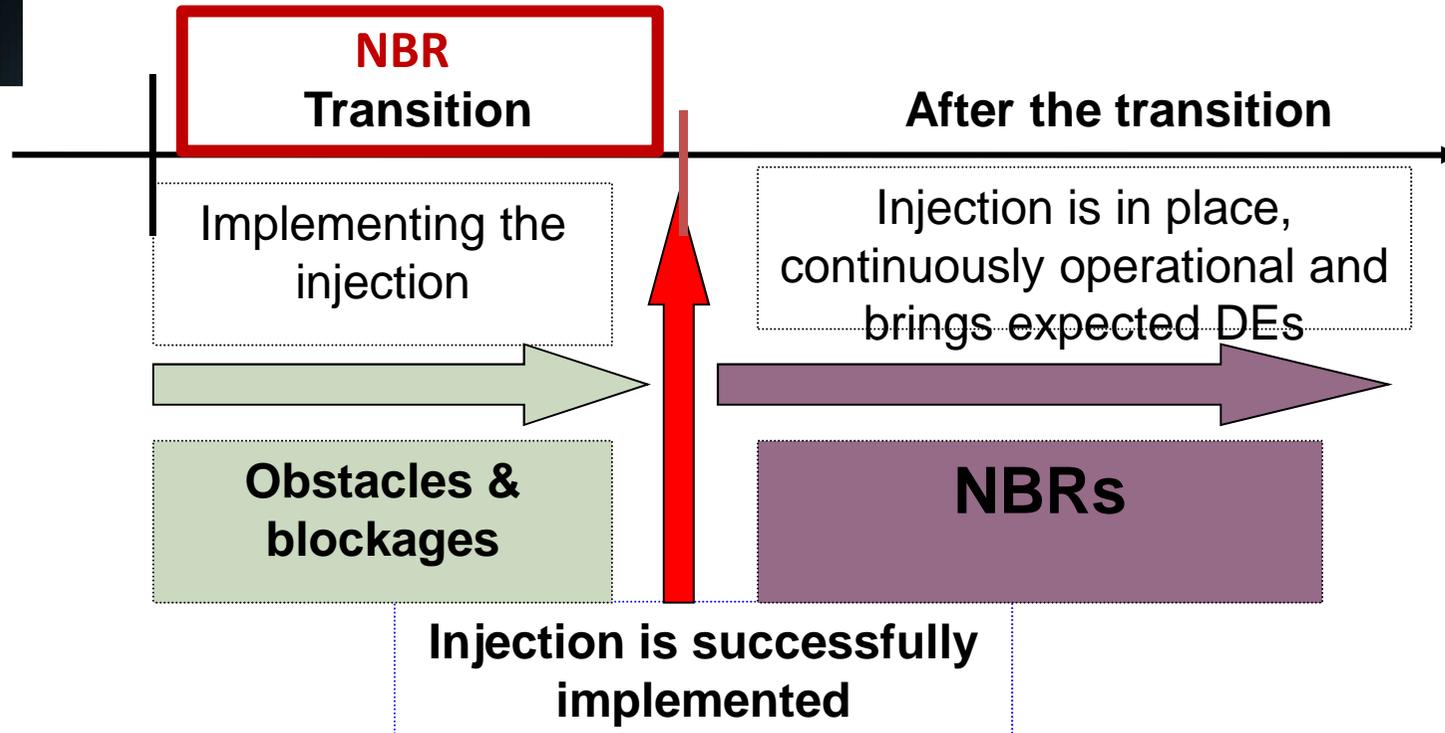
Confusion: NBR or obstacle?



Why does this confusion happen?

- We also categorize both of them under 'What may go wrong when we go as you suggest', and this is correct – they **both speak about what may go wrong**

Confusion: NBR or obstacle?



Why does this confusion happen?

- Sometimes we **see a potential negative outcome (NBR) in the transition stage** that will create an obstacle to the implementation . How to qualify it and work with it – as an NBR or an obstacle?



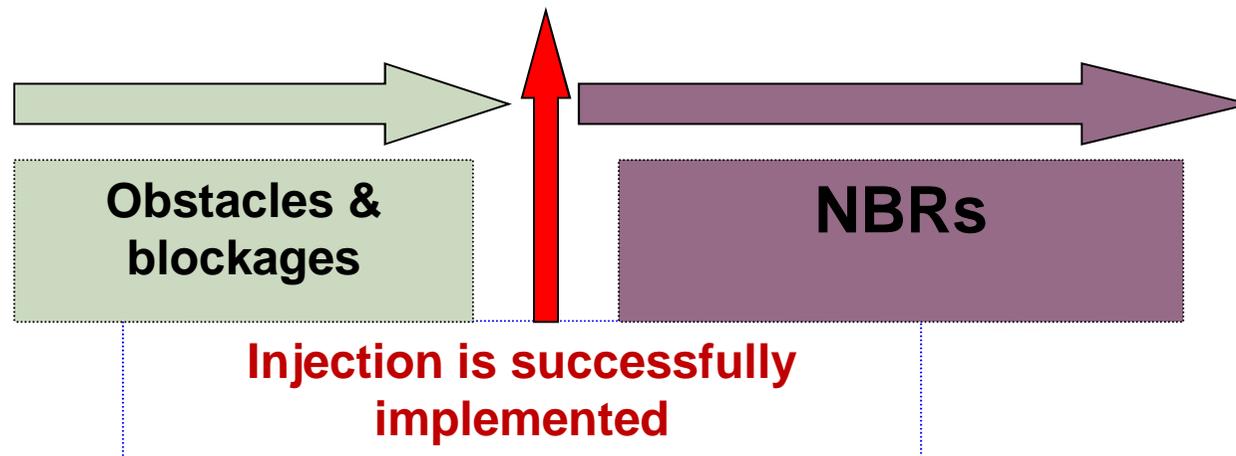
Confusion: NBR or obstacle?

When we hear a reservation that starts with “Yes, but...” or expresses a reservation or disagreement WITHOUT a verbal signal “Yes, but...” the FIRST thing that needs to be checked:

will the negative outcome happen **AFTER or**

BEFORE THE INJECTION IS IMPLEMENTED

and has started to bring expected desired outcomes?





Confusion: NBR or obstacle?

“My people will not support this idea” - an NBR or an obstacle?

- This statement signals what **negative** for my system and myself I see if the decision is made to implement an idea:
 - I will have tension in the relationship with my people
 - I will not be liked and supported any more
 - I will have to put a lot of time and energy in trying to make them do what is expected of them
 - This will steal my time from other important things that I am expected to do as a manager
 - The system will be destructed by internal fights of positions regarding this idea and will deteriorate in the regular level of performance (double damage)
 - The system will not achieve what it is expected to achieve due to this idea

We need to **distinguish whether these negatives speak about**

- an NBR of **IMPLEMENTING** the idea, or
- an NBR of the **DECISION** to implement this idea, or
- an obstacle **TO IMPLEMENT** this idea?

And we need to be **very clear where on the Injection Implementation timeline these negatives appear.**

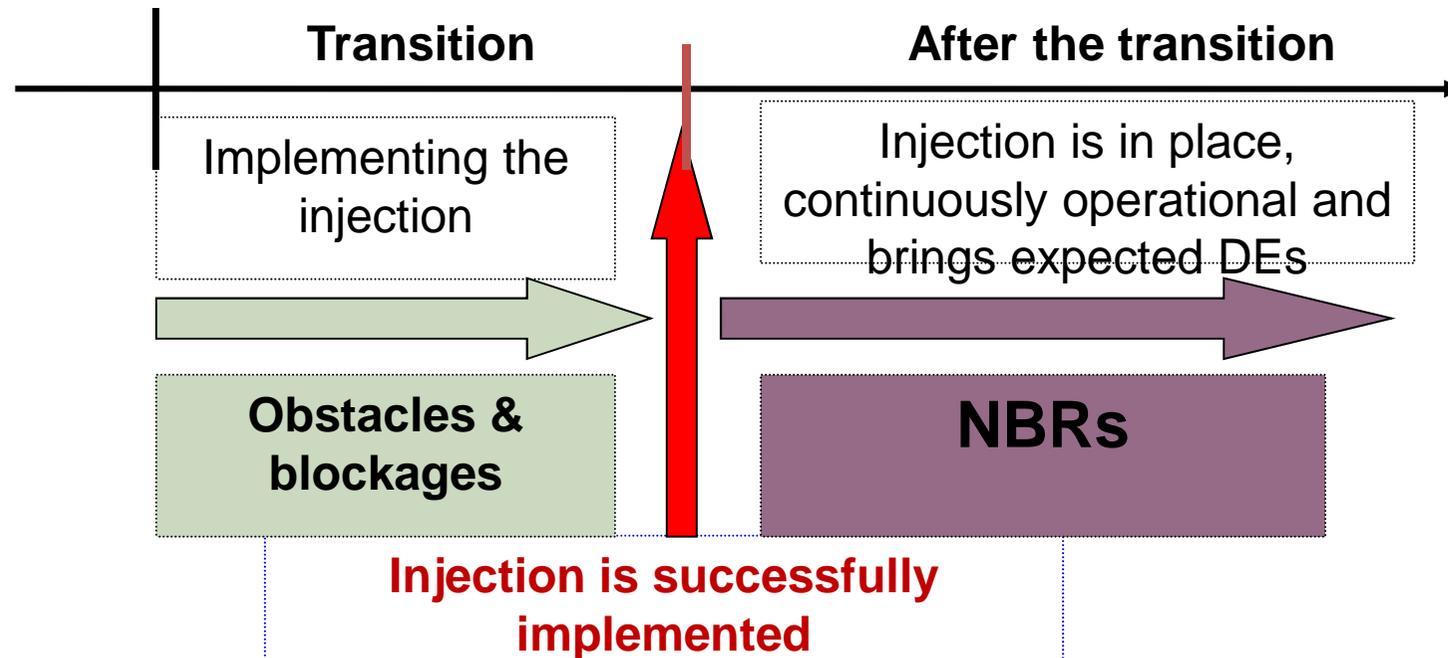


Confusion: NBR or obstacle?

“My people will not support this idea” - an NBR or an obstacle?
Check the MEANING OF THE RESERVATION!

“I will have tension in the relationship with my people”

WHEN ON THE TIMELINE?



If **BEFORE** the Injection is implemented – it is an **OBSTACLE**

If **AFTER** – it is an **NBR**



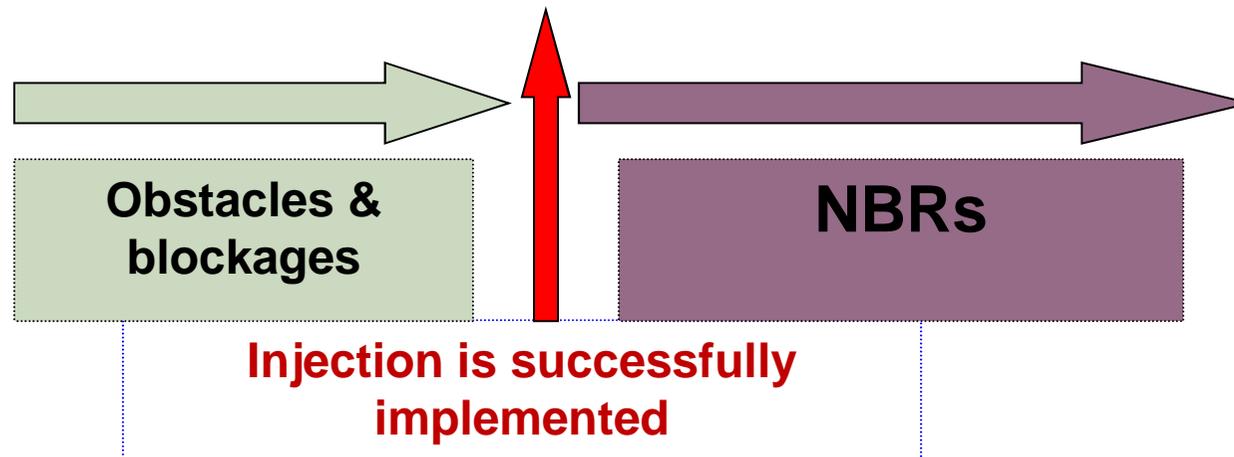
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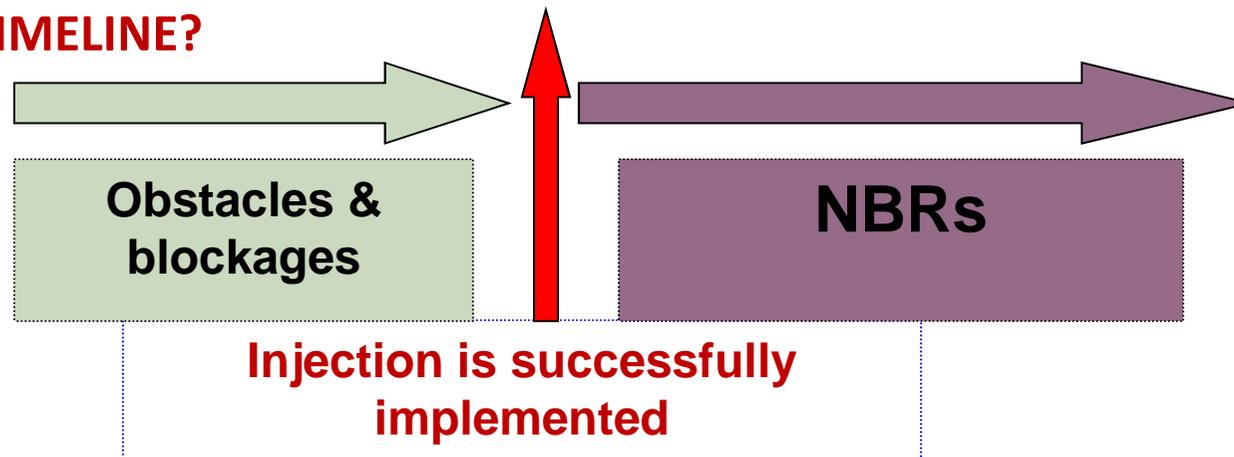


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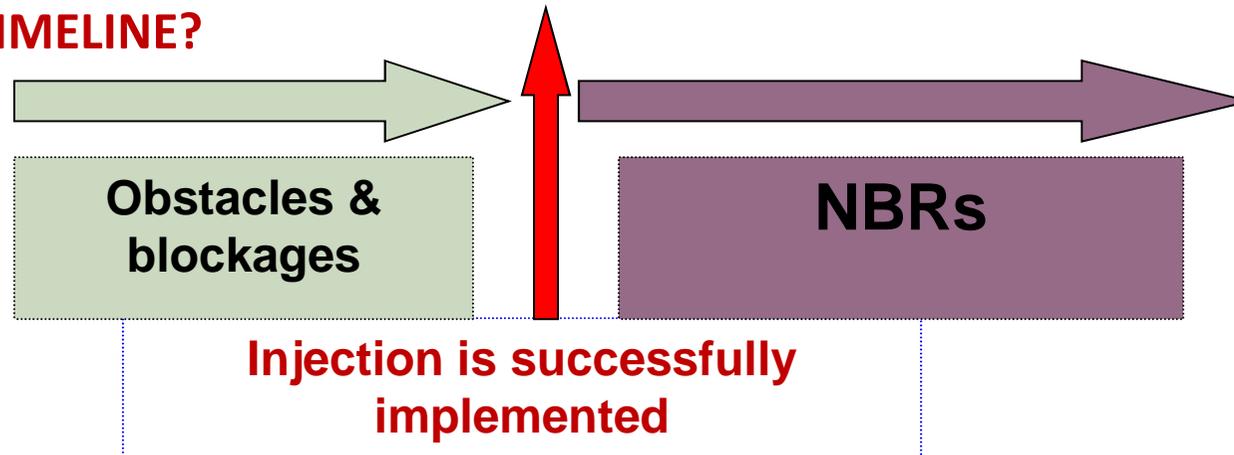
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WHEN ON THE TIMELINE?



If **BEFORE** the Injection is implemented – it is an **OBSTACLE**

If **AFTER** – it is an **NBR**



Confusion: NBR or obstacle?

When we see a potential negative outcome (NBR) in **the transition stage that will create an obstacle to the implementation - what tool to use – NBR or any of the tools that deal with obstacles: Intermediate Objectives/Ambitious Target/Prerequisite Tree? Do we need both NBR and a tool dealing with obstacles, and if yes – what is the sequence?**

When we speak about a perceived event in the Transition stage – we deal with a clearly worded obstacle, and should identify the Intermediate Objective (IO) for this obstacle.

When this perceived negative is an NBR of THE DECISION to implement an idea, and the outcome of this NBR is something that will create problems in the process of implementing THE IDEA – then the Intermediate Objective(s) will be developed as the outcome of the Supporting Injection for the potential negative outcome.

In our example, we need to understand and record the logic of how THE DECISION to implement the idea (NOT THE IDEA ITSELF!) will lead to the negative outcome “My people will not support the idea”.



Confusion: NBR or obstacle?

Please pay attention that the NBR “Decision to implement the idea” leading to “My people will not support the idea” is NOT THE SAME as the logical branch that will show the INJECTION “IMPLEMENT the idea” leading to the negative outcome “My people will not support the idea”.

Such a logical branch can be called an NBR of implementing the Injection “Implement the idea” only if we perceive that even though your people will NOT support the idea THEY WILL ANYWAY SUCCESSFULLY IMPLEMENT THE IDEA and AFTER the injection is successfully implemented they will not support this idea. In other words – their lack of support is NOT an obstacle and it does not worry you. Was this what was really meant by this reservation?

However, if your concern is that their lack of support will lead to you becoming unpopular, unliked, burnt out **as a result of the constant struggle with them in the implementation phase while they will be SUCCESSFULLY IMPLEMENTING THE IDEA** – then it is your NBR.



NBR/obstacle or a disguise for Layer 2?

Layer 2 **is disagreement with the direction of solution.**

Is it possible that when people say ‘Yes, but’ and carry on with the content that indicates an NBR or an obstacle, they in fact disagree with the direction of the solution and bring their reservations as the arguments why the direction of the solution is not good?

- Risky or dangerous – an NBR
- Difficult or expensive – an obstacle

Two areas:

- How to recognize that Yes, But... signals that about the disagreement with the direction of the solution?
- Which tools to use?



The difference between an obstacle and an UDE

From the point of view of the global meaning, an UDE is an obstacle to achieving the desired performance level of the system.

However, when we speak about the difference between an Obstacle and an UDE as TOC Thinking Processes elements, there are four aspects to it:

- 1 - the essence of each of these two TP tools
- 2 - the wording
- 3 - the 'destiny' of the notion recorded in an Obstacle vs an UDE
- 4 - a frequent confusion between an UDE of the system and an Obstacle to the implementation of the solution to remove the system UDEs



The difference between an obstacle and an UDE

1. The **essence** of an UDE and an obstacle as TP elements

- An Obstacle and Intermediate Objective (IO) as elements of TP, they are **elements of the secondary layer**. An Obstacle is a **derivative of the solution**. We can identify an obstacle(s) to a specific solution only **AFTER** we have this solution. Hence, we start speaking about an obstacle, and do the logical work with it **AFTER** we have developed the solution to the problem. And an IO is a **derivative** of an Obstacle.
- However, we work with an UDE as an element of TP, **BEFORE WE HAVE A SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM**. An UDE is a loud signal of the problem in the system. An UDE is what everybody knows and speaks about, has taken steps to sort out, but it keeps on reappearing, and there is **NO KNOWN SOLUTION** (not on the surface) of how to **STOP THE UDE FROM REAPPEARING**.



The difference between an obstacle and an UDE

1. The **essence** of an UDE and an obstacle as TP elements 10 UDE Rules

1. UDE wording consists of a **short, simple sentence** – it cannot contain a **cause-effect relationship**.
2. The UDE is an **ongoing problem** that exists in your reality, and which does not allow **your system to perform better**.
3. It is a **not a one-time recent action or event** – its wording cannot have verbs like ‘get,’ ‘go,’ etc.; the wording should **describe the state of the system**.
4. It is within **your area of responsibility**.
5. **Something can be done about it**.
6. It must **not be blame**.
7. It must **not be a speculated cause**.
8. It must **not be a hidden solution** (wishful thinking for solving the problem).
9. It does **not require clarification of its negative impact/effect**.
10. It must **not be subjective** – it should not contain such words as ‘difficult,’ “hard,” “poor,” etc.



The difference between an obstacle and an UDE

2. The **wording**

- An Obstacle is **ANYTHING** that blocks an implementation of an idea. The wording of an Obstacle is usually of the nature of "don't have", "won't get" or "don't know". The implied solution for the situation is obvious and usually has a 'mirror reflection' wording: "have", "have received", "have learnt".
- **The wording of an Obstacle implies a solution.** This is what makes the clear cut difference between an Obstacle and an UDE, because **an UDE must NOT be a hidden solution** (Rule 8 of the 10 UDE Rules above).



The difference between an obstacle and an UDE

2. The **wording**

The wording in the following examples implies a solution. These statements can be treated as Obstacles, but **NOT** as UDEs:

"We do not have the specifications" → "Get the specifications from somebody who certainly has them"

"Our machines are old" → "Buy newer machines/Reject orders that cannot be properly produced on these old machines/Find subcontractors with the new machines and pass over these orders to them"

"Our server room is too small" → "Move the server room to a bigger room"

"We do not have enough qualified personnel" → "Train personnel/Hire new personnel that have all required qualifications"



The difference between an obstacle and an UDE

3. The '**destiny**' of the notion recorded in an Obstacle vs an UDE

There is another clear cut between an Obstacle and an UDE:
a notion that has created an Obstacle **MAY STAY**, while an UDE must **NOT STAY** stay, it must be removed.

If we find a way to **prevent** what blocks now us from blocking us from achieving what we want, then it stops being an Obstacle, while still being there.

'A mountain' **BLOCKING THE WAY** is clearly an obstacle to achieve the desired outcome - to get to a certain point. However, to **remove this blockage**, one does not have to remove the mountain.



The difference between an obstacle and an UDE

4. A frequent **confusion between an UDE of the system and an Obstacle to the implementation** of the solution to remove the system UDEs

Statements of the type

- "Top management do not have time to properly monitor the implementation",
- "People that are supposed to be doing tasks on integrating the new system are too busy with their everyday work",
- "The client is not doing its share of work",
- "The budget that the client has is not enough to give them the needed service", etc.

are not UDEs of the system, but **Obstacles** that a consultant/manager faces **in the implementation**.



The difference between resistance and disagreement

**Layers of Resistance is a tool to work with
RESISTANCE TO A SUGGESTED CHANGE,
and NOT with ANY disagreement.**

My recommendation: before suggesting/using/referring to Layers of Resistance, check if the situation is about a suggested solution to a problem.

NOT every “Yes, But...”, and absolutely not every “No” means resistance at all, or resistance to a suggested solution.



The difference between resistance and disagreement

Typical mistakes:

1. Confusion of Entity Existence Category of Legitimate Reservations with resistance and conflict.
2. Lack of understanding that Layers of Resistance deal with **DISAGREEING WITH THE SUGGESTED SOLUTION TO A PROBLEM**, and **NOT** just with ANY 'NO' in any context.
3. Confusion of **INABILITY** to produce desired behavior with resistance.



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Questions?