

**TACTics Journal**  
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In this issue:

*--Announcing the 13<sup>th</sup> TOCfE International Conference!*

*- -A TOC Time Machine by Dr. James Holt*

*--And Finally...from Alan*



**TOC for Education  
13<sup>th</sup> International Conference**

**October 8-11, 2011**

**Orlen Training Center  
Plock, Poland**

### A TOC Time Machine by Dr. James Holt

I think Time is the ultimate constraint.

What we choose to do with our time determines who we are.

Wouldn't it be nice if we could have a Time Machine?

I think I found it!

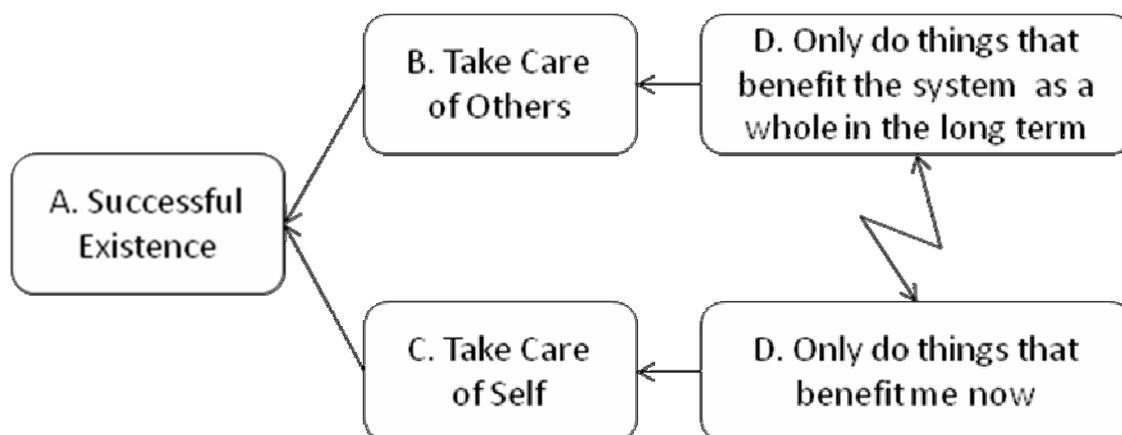
Let me see if I can explain what I call the TOC Flux Capacitor. This will be an attempt at adding my own understanding to a 15 second burst of insight Dr Eli Goldratt made at a three day 'Now and Into the Future' presentation. Most of this is my thoughts, so, don't blame anyone else. But, my thoughts have been formed by so many who have contributed, I can't even hope of identifying the sources. Sorry.

First a little background.

When I was playing with a group of my grandkids for a few days, I realized, "Children just want what they want." I said that out loud to another adult and immediately understood that adults are just the same. "All we want is what we want." So, what is it that determines what people want?

People want what they want. Some wants lead to good things. Some wants lead to bad things. Parents, environments, schools, religions, experience, physiology and individual personality traits (character) tend to lead us to want the right things. Advertising also tries to do the same thing. When we see something just because we didn't know it existed!

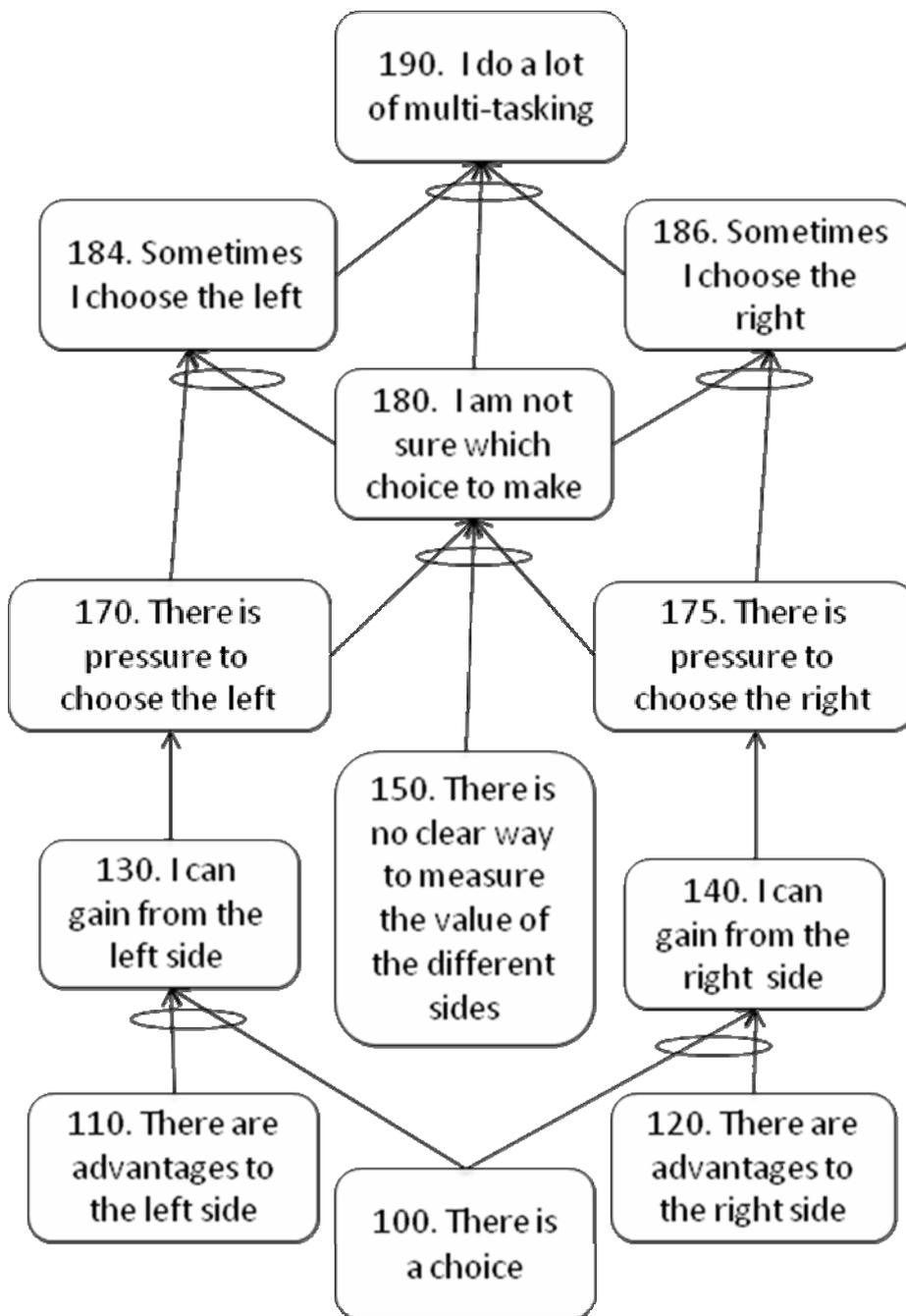
With the great diversity of individual experiences, environments, and learning is combined with an individual's personality, the world becomes unbelievably diverse. It is amazing that wants can even be categorized at all. There is an underlying core problem behind all systems:



This conflict can be voiced in many ways. It could be, "Me versus Them," "Ours' versus "Theirs," "Local versus Global," ore even "Good vs. Evil."

Now, considering the diversity of wants, the plethora of management options, the variety and complex systems of flow AND the uncertainty of what is the best choice to make THEN you have a perfect storm (The Perfect Storm Cloud).

Let me draw this 'difficulty in making decisions' in a slightly different way. When I have a choice, I consider things on the left and things on the right. Both seem to have advantages. I could gain from either side. If there is no clear way to measure the value of the different sides, I'm not sure which side to choose.



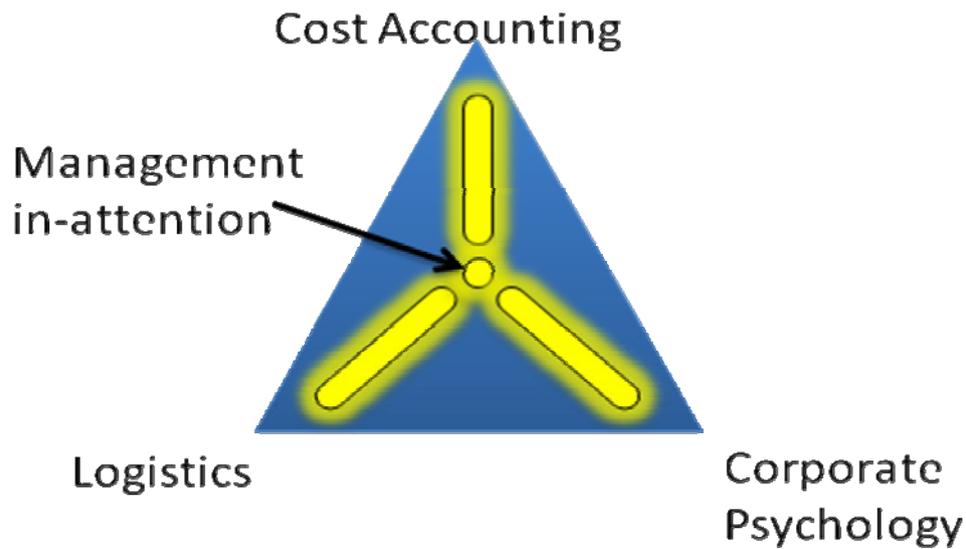
I don't think the Core Problem is the freedom to make a choice. Rather, the Core Problem is the inability to correctly evaluate which choice is best.

Without clear criteria of what is best, I choose one side and when the Negative Branch Reservations start coming in (there are always Negative Branch Reservations with any choice), then I may change my mind and choose the other side. Then, different Negative Branches occur and I shift back. And then, back again. And back again. The same thing happens at my desk. While I'm working on something important, I receive a phone call and the call becomes "More Important."

Every company, every discipline, every family, every individual struggles with this cloud. We all suffer from not knowing the answers. We all suffer from testing many distractions. This is just the opposite of Focus. This is just the opposite of Flow.

During the recent Now and Into the Future event, Dr Goldratt described how Production and Distribution (Logistics) suffered from management in-attention. He talked about how the financial management (Cost Accounting) suffered from management in-attention. He explained how Organizational Behavior (Corporate Psychology) also suffered from management in-attention.

Then, it dawned on me what Eli was saying, "Management in-attention" is the Core Problem. I drew this triangle below in my notes. It reminded me of the Flux Capacitor from the old movie "Back To The Future." In the movie, Dr. Emmett Brown knocked his head in the bathroom and saw in his mind the Flux Capacitor. The Flux Capacitor looked like a triangle. Dr Brown showed it to everyone and no one recognized it as the key to Time Travel. But in my triangle, the center, the Core Problem, was Management in-attention.



Management in-attention leads to shifting attention, disruption, and delays. Have you ever thought, "If management had been paying attention, this problem would not have happened."?

If management in-attention is really the Core Problem, then we should see many efforts in the past at trying to solve this problem in management.

What do you see?

I see every management technique since the Ten Commandments has been an effort to help evaluate choices. There have been many management tools developed over the years that management itself is inundated with ideas and things to do. There are so many methods, ideas, necessities, recommendations, policies and guidelines that even good managers are just as confused as anyone else.

If management-in-attention is really the Core Problem, then we should frequently hear stories about a management group that did pay attention and did achieve success. Yes, there are many, but, as people try to emulate those successes, few achieve them. What are we to do?

Well, now we know that management in-attention is the Core Problem, we can re-evaluate all the management tools we use to see which parts of these tools **REDUCE MANAGEMENT ATTENTION** and which ones **INCREASE MANAGEMENT ATTENTION**.

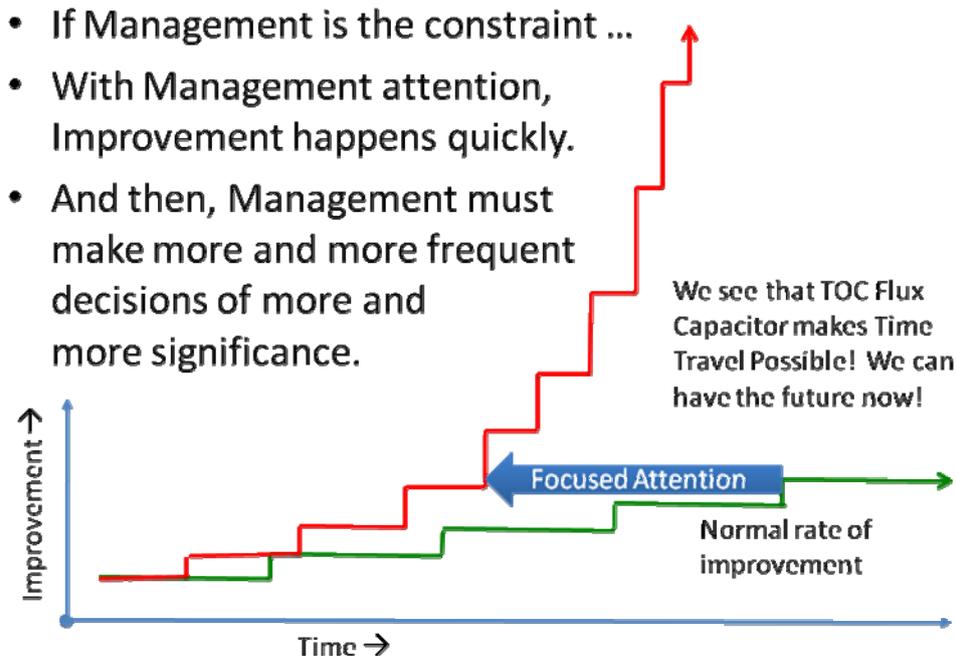
The first thing to look for are:

Which management tools work without management attention? Those would be good.

Which management tools increase the need for management attention? Those would be bad.

What can we do to reduce the load on management? Here is where TOC really helps management.

The Theory of Constraints provides simple methods of focus, of managing variability of dealing with flow, improving human behavior and developing strategy. As we apply TOC principles to Focus Attention we can improve the normal rate of improvement.



With improving management attention, we can make faster and more significant decisions. And, the better we get, the better we will become.

Reducing management in-attention and focusing management's attention, we can make more and more frequent decisions of more and more significance. That is, we can achieve the normal rate of improvement much sooner! Isn't that the same as Time Travel? This is TOC Time Travel that gives you MORE TIME in your life to do those things which really matter.

Now the challenge to the academics:

If Management In-Attention is the core problem, then every TOC solution, which is a systemic one, should help reduce Management In-Attention. Can we prove it?

If Management In-Attention is the core problem, then we should see a plethora of previous attempts to deal with it. Can we document that?

If Management In-Attention is the core problem, then we should be able to glean from history some successes many correct and true principles that will help solve it. Can we?

If Management In-Attention is the core problem, and it continues to persist, then that means all previous solutions have not solved it. TOC must solve it. Can we?

If Management In-Attention is the core problem, and it is getting worse and worse (in spite of the best management talents in the world, including TOC – some TOC companies also suffer from management in-attention), then there must be some new factors entering into the domain of management that are causing the increased management in-attention. Can we find them? Can we turn the new factor from stumbling blocks into a stepping stones or even a leverage points?

The opportunities for TOC research have just mushroomed.

Keep Thinking!

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And Finally ...

What an interesting analogy to the 'Flux Capacitor' from Dr. Holt. It leads me to wonder what the 'Management In-Attention' is in the education world.

Certainly, in the UK, the attentions of many head teachers and education authorities are diverted by the pressures of government policy and financial cutbacks and this is a genuine concern. But, equally, I think that many fear the consequences of change and are not prepared to reach out for solutions that TOC and TOCfE are likely to offer.

Yet, there are a few 'Flagship' schools and colleges that are recognised for their success. Perhaps more research is needed into the vagaries and variations in the attitudes of 'the powers that be'.

As always,

Please send anything that you would like us to consider for publication in Tactics to the following address....

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Alan ...