**Liberating Structures[[1]](#footnote-2)**

**Making Space with TRIZ \***

The following information is available at: [Liberating Structures - 6. TRIZ](https://www.liberatingstructures.com/6-making-space-with-triz/)

**Stop Counterproductive Activities and Behaviors to Make Space for Innovation (35 min.)**

*Every act of creation is first an act of destruction. – Pablo Picasso*

**What is made possible?**You can clear space for innovation by helping a group let go of what it knows (but rarely admits) limits its success and by inviting creative destruction. **TRIZ** makes it possible to challenge sacred cows safely and encourages heretical thinking. The question “*What must we****stop doing****to make progress on our deepest purpose?”*induces seriously fun yet very courageous conversations. Since laughter often erupts, issues that are otherwise taboo get a chance to be aired and confronted. With creative destruction come opportunities for renewal as local action and innovation rush in to fill the vacuum. Whoosh!

**Five Structural Elements**

**1. Structuring Invitation**

In this three-step process, ask:

* 1. “Make a list of all you can do to make sure that you achieve the worst result imaginable with respect to your top strategy or objective.”
* 2. “Go down this list item by item and ask yourselves, ‘Is there anything that we are currently doing that in any way, shape, or form resembles this item?’ Be brutally honest to make a second list of all your counterproductive activities/programs/procedures.”
* 3. “Go through the items on your second list and decide what first steps will help you stop what you know creates undesirable results?”

**2. How Space Is Arranged and Materials Needed**

* Unlimited number of small groups of 4 to 7 chairs, with or without small tables
* Paper for participants to record

**3. How Participation Is Distributed**

* Everybody involved in the work is included
* Everyone has an equal opportunity to contribute

**4. How Groups Are Configured**

* Groups with 4 to 7 participants
* Established teams or mixed groups

**5. Sequence of Steps and Time Allocation**

* After introduction, three segments, 10 minutes for each segment
* Introduce the idea of **TRIZ**and identify an unwanted result. If needed, have the groups brainstorm and pick the most unwanted result. 5 min.
* Each group uses **1-2-4-All** to make a first list of all it can do to make sure that it achieves this most unwanted result. 10 min.
* Each group uses **1-2-4-All** to make a second list of all that it is currently doing that resembles items on their first list. 10 min.
* Each group uses **1-2-4-All** to determine for each item on its second list what first steps will help it stop this unwanted activity/program/procedure. 10 min.

**WHY? Purposes**

* Make it possible to speak the unspeakable and get skeletons out of the closet
* Make space for innovation
* Lay the ground for creative destruction by doing the hard work in a fun way
* **TRIZ**may be used before or in place of visioning sessions
* Build trust by acting all together to remove barriers

**Tips and Traps**

* Enter into **TRIZ** with a spirit of serious fun
* Don’t accept ideas for doing something new or additional: be sure suggestions are about stopping activities or behaviors, not about starting new things. It is worth the wait.
* Begin with a VERY unwanted result, quickly confirm your suggestion with the group
* Check in with groups that are laughing hard or look confused
* Take time for groups to identify similarities to what they are doing now and explore how this is harmful
* Include the people that will be involved in stopping the activities that come out and ask, “Who else needs to be included?”
* Make real decisions about what will be stopped (number your decisions 1,2,3…) in the form of “I will stop” and “we will stop.”

**Examples**

* For reducing harm to patients experiencing safety lapses (e.g., wrong-side surgery, patient falls, medication errors, iatrogenic infections) with cross-functional groups: “How can we make sure we always operate on the wrong side?”
* For helping institutional leaders notice how it is they inadvertently exclude diverse voices: “How can we devise policies and practices that only work for a select few?”
* For IT professionals: “How can we make sure we build an IT system that no one will want to use?”
* For leadership groups: “How can we make sure we keep doing the same things with the same people while asking for different results?”

1. Lipmanowics, H. & McCandless, K. (2014). *The surprising power of liberating structures: Simple rules to unleash a culture of innovation.* Liberating Structures Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)