# CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING: BALANCING PLANNING AND IMPROV

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# People with disabilities are constantly problem solving:

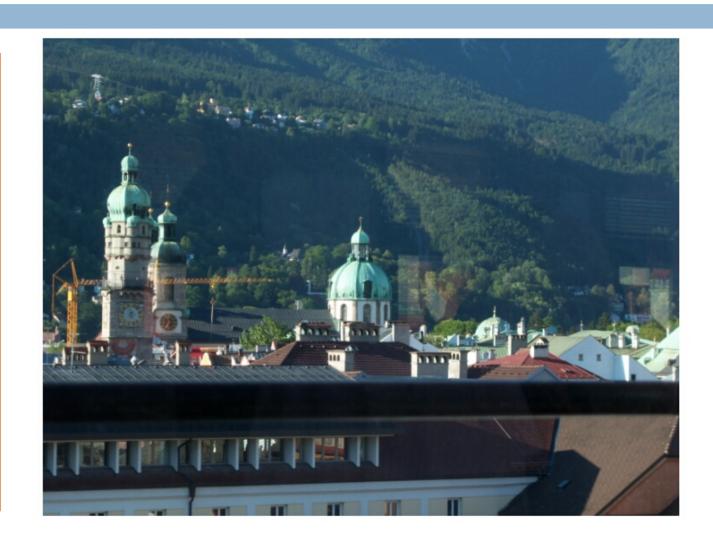
- Adapting existing tools/devices to serve new/additional purposes;
- Simple is better;
- Cheaper is better;
  - Unless you have unlimited funds, you never know for sure if you'll find a "payer" for new equipment
- Non-specialized equipment is better than equipment that is so specialized that it is only useful to a very discrete demographic.

## Attending a conference in Innsbruck, Austria illustrates a lot of issues

## **J**ULY 2007

International
Conference on
Higher
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# Expanding Access: Accommodating Medical and Health Science Students in Clinical Settings

International Conference on Higher Education and Disability
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### For airline travel, taking a manual chair is a smarter option, because it is harder for the airline to break this...

Since my
insurance pays
for a power
wheelchair, I
have to buy
any additional
equipment "out
of pocket".

A "Breezy" manual chair (by Quickie) costs around \$300 online (Spinlife.com).



#### ...than this.

A power wheelchair designed for indoor/outdo or "heavy" use will cost \$5,000 and up, depending on the bells & whistles...



Last year, I bought one of these for travel and took it to San Diego,

Folding lightweight wheelchair called the "At'm".

Only goes about 3 mph and gets stuck on thresholds higher than 1/2 inch.

Cost \$1,395.



#### But it drove like one of these:

Antique tricycle...



I tried to rent a power wheelchair in Innsbruck, but couldn't find a vendor, so I rented this instead:

Meet Mary.

For about \$10 euros an hour, I got someone to push me around Innsbruck, and give me a tour at the same time...



#### My room was big and accessible.



#### And so was the bathroom.

One feature
of European
toilets I found
everywhere
which
happens to
be more
accessible is
the big button
on the wall to
flush the
toilet.



Really well-designed "roll-in" shower with a fold-down bench.





#### As long as I didn't want to look in the mirror.

Sitting in the manual wheelchair, the bathroom counter-top hit me at chest-height...



### These were the 2 most useful pieces of "assistive technology" that I brought with me to Innsbruck:

For picking stuff I dropped off the floor; much easier for me to handle than the tools designed to be "grabbers" for people with disabilities.

For opening bottles of water and soda





#### Key Observations, Lessons and Immutable Truths

- On a practical level the person with a disability must be flexible;
- Must be able to figure out multiple ways to accomplish tasks,
   with and without assistance, if possible;
- Must be able to explain with a high level of detail exactly what is needed, whether in regard to services or tasks that need to be accomplished;
- Business-like transactions for services is a better system than
   the charity model for both parties involved.
  - Particularly true if disabled person is a professional