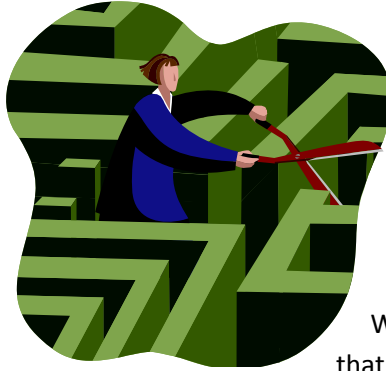


Estimate of the Situation

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The Matrix

In the 1999 Keanu Reeves movie, *The Matrix*, humanity is trapped in a virtual world created in by machines. The reality that people experience is created within their minds. It does not physically exist. This metaphor is worth thinking about because all of us live in a world with boundaries created by our experiences and our beliefs.

When confronted by adversity, our first instinct is to call upon techniques that have been effective in the past. When the boundaries shift and we find ourselves in unfamiliar territory and the familiar solutions are no longer effective, we struggle. That is the situation in which many hospital executives and managers find themselves today. “Thinking outside the box” is one of the most overused and abused clichés in management. When “the box” goes away (or the Matrix changes) so must our solutions.

Imagine for a moment that you suddenly find yourself on a planet without health care. Your job is to design the most effective way to deliver quality primary health care to the planet’s inhabitants starting from scratch. You have available all of today’s advanced medical technology and unlimited start-up capital. You are unfettered by arbitrary regulatory requirements. Although most of the population is middle-class, about ten percent of the families are poor. There is no health insurance. There are only two rules. The first is that your design must be self-sustaining. The second is that although you will be responsible for performance of the total entity, each element must be independently managed.

1. What essential services would you provide?
2. Would you house all of the services in one building? If not, how would you distribute them?
3. How would you organize them?
4. How would you measure the effectiveness of each element? What data would you need to measure that effectiveness?
5. What payment methods will you use?

How does your design differ from that of today’s community hospital?

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