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.
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).
A power wheelchair designed for indoor/outdoor 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 ½ 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