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Statistical Engineering: Strategy versus Tactics

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The International Statistical Engineering Association on its webpage states, “Our discipline provides guidance to develop appropriate strategies to produce sustainable solutions.” Clearly, strategy should be an essential foundation the proper implementation of statistical engineering. Yet, virtually all of the materials on the website are more tactical than strategic. This talk explores the issue, offers an explanation why, and outlines a pathway for improvement. This talk is the result of the author’s experience as a Fulbright Scholar working with colleagues at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN) in Natal, Brazil, June to August 2022 and May to July 2023.

The goal was to initiate a Statistical Engineering program over the two-year period 2022-23. Covid seriously impacted the group’s efforts in 2022. However, it did provide a start. The focus was to train a cadre of faculty and students in the basics of statistical engineering and work on projects with local companies with the full support of the organizations’ senior leadership. The group established working relationships with two local companies in 2022, but covid derailed the proposed projects. The group enjoyed more success in 2023, working with the university’s Institute for Tropical Medicine.

These interactions with local organizations to address their complex opportunities provides an appropriate setting to distinguish the truly strategic elements of statistical engineering from the purely tactical. Understanding the difference is essential for the future of the discipline. Basically, the discipline of statistical engineering can address its own complex opportunity by learning from our Brazilian experience.

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