

Introduction

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Dear Subscribers:

After reading Valery Kraev's year of articles giving a basic foundation for TRIZ and how it can be used for problem solving and technology planning challenges, it's a little humbling to follow such an outstanding summary. Richard Langevin, knowing of my particular interest in applying TRIZ in the organizational, business, and the "soft" business/people side of problem solving, asked if I would write a column similar to Valery's, but with a focus on these types of applications as well as share some advice and case studies. As someone who has used and is certified in several psychological assessment techniques, the people side of problem solving has always fascinated me, especially in the context of a rigorous toolkit such as TRIZ. With Valery's substantive foundation, as well as what you have learned from your own readings and problem solving, I'd like to stretch your brain a little in how you might apply these principles outside the technical problem solving arena where TRIZ is traditionally been practiced. The continuing growth of different lists of 40 principles applied to different areas, all the way from software, to chemistry and architecture demonstrates the fundamental viability of TRIZ in almost any field of endeavor.

Over the next year, I'll be sharing with you some of my insights, experiences, and case studies in the use of TRIZ problem solving principles in "non-technical" applications. Now what's "non-technical"? Obviously there's a grey line between a purely scientific problem (a new way of machining a shaft to eliminate deformities or a new synthesis route to a chemical) and a purely non-technical problem (how do I tell my boss I disagree with him or her?). Business problems involve a little of both. For the purposes of this column, we're going to define a "soft" problem as one in which the solution's impact varies a great deal for different individuals or groups of people, where the primary source of the problem is people in some sense, widely different views of a problem are held, or where problem solving resources may be more on the people side than the technical side. We'll walk through the various tools in the TRIZ tool kit (not necessarily following any particular steps in ARIZ or any particular version of ARIZ) and show some examples and present some thought provoking questions. Feel free to share your comments, observations, and questions via e-mail, jackhipple@innovation-triz.com and I'll be glad to respond and post appropriate points in future columns.

Before our first discussion next time, I'd like to ask you to consider the following two situations and begin to think about the difference between "hard" and "soft" TRIZ. Send your comments to jackhipple@innovation-triz.com and I'll include them in the next column.

Situation 1: As a TRIZ specialist, you are facilitating a problem solving session and you feel that the group has come close to an ideal solution. The concept has been drawn up on a board, assignments for follow through have been made, and you can hardly wait until you get home to send your invoice. (If you don't like the consulting example, pretend you are an internal TRIZ "master" and the same thing has happened). You call back in a week to check on things and find out that nothing has been done with this idea that everyone thought was so great. In fact, the

problem is being attacked in a totally different way without the ideas generated being used. What might have happened? What might have you done differently from a TRIZ perspective?

Situation 2: A new merit raise award system has just been implemented within your organization and within months, you, as the Human Resources Manager who was primarily responsible for its design, begin to hear about resignations of key personnel and grumblings in the hallways. What are some issue here from a TRIZ perspective?

NEXT WEEK: The Complications of the "Soft" Side of the Ideal Final Result