

TRIZ solutions for managing a business

Innovation, creativity and best solutions

First let's get this straight, what you want are the *best solutions*, creative or not. Creativity and innovation are often part of fantastic solutions, but the goal is to create or find the best solutions.

To find the best solutions it is good to do a lot of exploring, but there is so much space out there in the world of ideas it is easy to get lost.

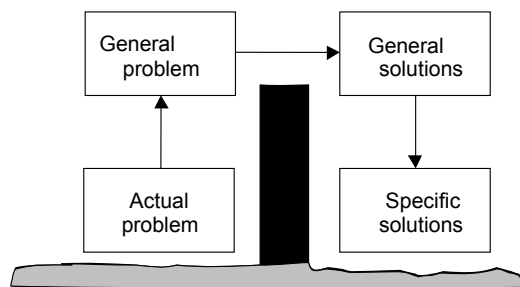
So it is good to have a *universal traveller's guide* to exploring new places.

TRIZ is that guide.

TRIZ explained

TRIZ is a systematic approach to engineering design, which is being adopted by large and small companies around the world, from automotive, to pharmaceutical, to aerospace, to food manufacturing.

It was developed in the former Soviet Union beginning in 1946 with the ideas of Genrich Altshuller. TRIZ stands for The Theory of Inventive Problem Solving. If the acronym doesn't seem to quite fit it is because the letters are in Russian! When the Soviet borders collapsed TRIZ experts went to Israel and the USA so that from the early 90's TRIZ began being adopted by such companies as Motorola, Procter and Gamble, NASA and others.



Altshuller suggested that instead of filing away lots of specific solutions (he was a patent officer) we should have a filing system which recorded the general nature of solutions, with the specific as illustrations only.

For example, a specific solution which might be found such as to 'inject drug into person' would be filed as a generic solution to 'move substance through barrier'.

By filing all ways known to man (and indeed known to nature, if we can spot them) of moving substances through barriers in one place, when someone else wants to 'move substance through barriers' they can go to one site and find everything!

Simple ideas are always the best.

So what has this to do with managing a business?

Just as we can treat all inventions as examples of general physical solutions we can also see all specific businesses as examples of general business solutions, though we need a little bit of open thinking to do so.

And we can use the same models for physical actions to help us explore our ideas for making business solutions generic.

Examples always help.

Moving machines is the same as moving people!

And by moving people we mean moving them from one place to another, mentally and physically.

If we want to move a machine we can, quite simply, push it or pull it or do both.

If we push it we can move it very fast, but it is likely to steer itself off course, so we have to watch all the time and correct our push again and again and again. It is not very efficient but it gets the job done quickly.

If we pull it we have to be careful that our link is strong enough, so we have more of a limit on how fast we can move it. But we need not be too concerned about where it is going because it will follow. So it is very efficient.

If we push it and pull it we had better be careful to control what we are doing both ends! Ask any train driver in the USA!

If we want to do the same with people then we are talking managing or leading. If we push people into action then they are likely to respond quickly but the moment we stop watching they will go off in their own direction.

If we pull people, which is leadership, then they are likely to follow even when we are not watching them.

The same applies to selling. If we push people into buying they will go off and buy any product when we are not watching them. Good for today, bad for tomorrow.

If we do some pulling (this is going to sound like a good advert for marketing!) then customers will come along even without invitation. Coca-Cola does lots of work creating the links – they have a pull philosophy. And it works.

Generic solutions

You may think you are in a complicated business but in TRIZ terms it is all easily laid out. You move things, you measure things, you separate things, you join things, you use resources, you coordinate things, you change designs, systems and links.

These things are all known in the TRIZ world. And so are the solutions.

TRIZ is not some magically invented formula. It is basic common sense, once you have realised what you know, mostly, already. It is about thinking, and thinking about how you think, and maybe even thinking about how you think about your thinking!

Professional business management is not just about doing the job. It is about reflecting on what you know, and what you do not know. And TRIZ is the most comprehensive toolkit for reflection ever developed.

You can find out more on TRIZ by just using TRIZ as a search word. Or go to the sites:

www.triz-journal.com and www.aitriz.org

And don't forget, you are looking for best solutions, some may be simple, some may be very creative. But keep best solution in mind!