

The Envelope



"It is an astonishing fact that there are laws of nature, rules that summarize conveniently--not just qualitatively, but quantitatively--how the world works"--Carl Sagan, Astronomer (1934-1996)

What's the FUNCTION of an envelope? Maybe to contain something, keep something somewhat confidential? What is its function at a bank? For years we have been using it to contain a deposit slip and a deposit of some sort (check, cash). This envelope and its contents are then deposited into a slot into an ATM machine into which you have entered your PIN, instructions, etc. Well a few weeks ago, I drove up to a local Bank of America ATM machine with my envelope all sealed and all the materials inside and even wrote the deposit amount on the outside so that I wouldn't forget it. I inserted my ATM card, punched in my code and choice of transaction (DEPOSIT) and was then instructed to insert my deposit. I took the envelope and the normal place for the deposit did not have an opening large enough to fit the envelope. I was embarrassed and confused, canceled the transaction and circled back around to collect my thoughts and try again. No different. But this time I looked at the screen a little closer instead of being on autopilot from past experience. It said to insert the CHECK, not the envelope. So on the third try, I tore open the envelope, inserted the check, by itself (no deposit slip either), and lo and behold, an image of the check appears and the deposit amount is shown on the screen, evidently read by a very accurate optical scanner. After confirming that the amount had been read correctly, everything proceeded normally from there. Fortunately for me, no one saw this foolish and confused behavior! This occurred at a branch several miles away from my normal banking location, and the following weekend when this conversion was made at my local branch, there were people outside the drive through ATM's to help people with this change. Evidently, I was not the only person to have been confused.

Now this is an excellent example of strategic planning with TRIZ concepts involving trimming to a more ideal system and progression along the field evolution line. Now it could be that BofA was planning to make this change for a long time and just needed the optical scanning technology to develop (either in cost or accuracy or both). Or maybe someone said, we're spending \$\$millions on paper--how could we eliminate it and still get the same result? So we combine the concepts of field evolution, ideal system, and trimming all in one example.

Just two days ago Delta Airlines announced the elimination of ticket jacket envelopes. What was their function? To hold a paper ticket? Who uses these anymore? Less than 5% of the traveling public and the number shrinks dramatically every day as the surcharge is raised. Do you really need an envelope to hold a baggage claim slip? A receipt? Continental is even experimenting with eliminating the boarding pass and just giving you a number for use at the check in station.

Simple, but profound today examples of the use of TRIZ concepts that bring results to the bottom line. SOMETHING PERFORMS ITS FUNCTION AND DOESN'T EXIST! Remember that definition and re-think, re-engineer your system.

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TRIZ is finding more and more applications in a huge variety of applications, cultures, and organizations. If you haven't started your learning journey, ask yourself, why not?

Upcoming conference and training presentations:

Short TRIZ workshops at the Atlanta Creativity Exchange
Kennesaw State University Kennesaw, GA May 16-17

"How to Resolve Innovation Contradictions"

"Patterns of Invention: Learning from Others"

<https://www.kennesaw.edu/coned/2008aceconf.html>

3 Day Intensive Introduction to TRIZ

American Society of Mechanical Engineers and the American Institute of Chemical Engineers May 19-21 Chicago, IL

<http://calendar.asme.org/EventDetail.cfm?EventID=5323>

We have attendees from Caterpillar, Becton Dickinson, AGM Container Controls, MSP, Mission Assurance Engineering, and others. Plan to join us!

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