

The Wrench and the Shower Curtain



"Great Minds Think Alike--That's the Problem" -Harvard Business School Ad

We are constantly asked for examples of where TRIZ has been applied and we can point to numerous examples of client projects involving ourselves and others, frequently published in the TRIZ Journal (www.triz-journal.com). There are many more examples of real world, consumer product innovations that we see that may not have been invented with TRIZ specifically, but whose breakthroughs illustrate many TRIZ principles, begging the question of why these breakthroughs did not occur sooner.

All of you have used, at one time or another, a hand wrench. A recent new product introduction from GearWrench (http://www.gearwrench.com/catalog/wrenches/ratcheting/xl_x-beam/) shows an elegantly simple solution to a long standing problem in using wrenches. You want the flat side for the hand grip, but the narrow side to grip the nut. The pain of the narrow end of the wrench biting into the palm of your hand is not pleasant. But why does the handle of the wrench need to be the same shape everywhere? Can't it be one shape for one purpose and another shape somewhere else for another purpose, such as force or comfort? Well, that's what GearWrench has done. The handle is twisted in the middle to allow the user to have a flat surface in one place and a 90 degree surface at another place. Simple, isn't it? The TRIZ separation principles (space, time, condition, parts and whole) could have suggested this solution a LONG time ago. By the way, these are the same folks who, in 2006, received the Motor Magazine product of the year award for the magnetic oil pan lug nut, preventing loss of the nut into the oil pan. This is progression along the TRIZ field line from mechanical to a magnetic field.

Shower curtains are another long lived consumer product with another long standing irritation--- the need to thread the hooks through those little holes in the curtain especially with both the liner and the shower curtain sticking to each other. Take a look at this simple invention--the Polder Duo Rod (<http://www.organize.com/duoshcurod.html>). Two SEPARATE tracks for each curtain, or if you like, towels. Again separation in space.

Take a look at your products. What if you separated geometrical aspects of them in some way? How would that be beneficial?

Upcoming events:

3 Day Intensive Introduction to TRIZ

American Society of Mechanical Engineers and the American Institute of Chemical Engineers

October 6-8 Chicago, IL

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