

Parking, Magazines, Mugs, and Clocks



In our TRIZ workshops and consulting, we use what are known as TRIZ Lines and Patterns of Evolution. As with the TRIZ problem solving principles, contradiction tables, and separation principles, they are derived from the study of millions of inventive patents. We find that all products and systems follow these lines over time and so they can be used for strategic planning, next generation research, and personnel staffing.

Recent examples to stimulate your thinking:

1. US News and World Report, as well as PC magazine, no longer will publish paper versions. Many other magazines will follow and others now offer both on line and paper versions from which the subscriber can choose not to receive the paper subscription. What lines and principles from TRIZ does this illustrate? Well, several. First is the field evolution line related to communication—mechanical and thermal (drum beats and etchings), chemical (writing and printing), to electronic and electromagnetic. Second is the dynamism line as well as the TRIZ separation principles. These types of subscriptions allow you to download only what you want at the time you want and the subscription materials and ads can be customized for geographic location of the reader and possibly other characteristics.
2. Along with many California freeways whose tolls vary linearly with projected traffic volume, we are now seeing parking spaces whose prices change with location and time of day. Rental car companies are slowly catching on to the part time rental, leave it where you want car rental. You can also now pay for a nicer jail cell with a little bit of cash.
3. A new “TimeMug™” which has a clock (of varying design: dynamism of consumer choice!) embedded in the sidewall of the mug so that while you’re drinking coffee at a meeting or in your bosses office, you won’t forget that next meeting you have. Adding useful complexity. See it on your next flight in the Skymall catalog. There’s a patent disclosure in on this!
4. The “Peaceful Progression” Wake Up Clock, which gradually raises the light in the room as well as slowly increasing the volume of the alarm. It also releases an aroma scent as well as a nature sound(both of your choosing!) 15 minutes prior to the alarm beginning to go off. Adding useful complexity, Do It In Advance, Dynamism---all in one simple product. Again, check your Skymall catalog.

As we have said for years, innovations (as well as many aspects of product development) are not mysteries. There are known, repeatable patterns of problem solving as well as product and technology evolution. In the New Year, try a little less guessing and being science to your new product development efforts and your customer. It’s going to be a tough year as we have already seen. Use what we already know and make your use of research resources more focused and more productive.