


Stockyard and Paints Discover TRIZ



Two recent events highlighted in USA Today and Home Depot Commercials illustrate real world business applications of TRIZ principles. You've heard this before and you'll hear it again--there are no new ways to solve problems, just different application of known principles. As widely different as stockyards and painting are, these two examples illustrate several of the well known TRIZ principles constantly reused in providing problem solutions.

First, the cattle and the stockyards.

Visit: http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2009-06-25stockyards_N.htm

or pick up a back copy of USA Today from June 25 and read page 3A about stockyards in Sioux Falls, SD going out of business. Ranchers aren't trucking their cattle to the stockyards for the auctions we used to see and tried to keep up with what the auctioneer was saying. Now we "do it in reverse" (videos of the cattle are shown to bidders and the bidding occurs via satellite). What contradiction does this resolve? Loss of information vs. productivity. Look it up in your 60 year old contradiction table and see principle #13, "Do it in reverse". Now of course, without these new video and satellite tools this wasn't possible, but this is where TRIZ principles come into play doing planning and forecasting. The time and energy involved in moving cattle to a stockyard is not a new problem, but if you were an investor inclined TRIZ cowboy, you would know that this would happen sooner or later. What resources are required? You'd be watching the development of satellite communication and video technology, and when it was good enough, you'd start a company to provide this service and all the stockyard operators would be out of business and you'd be wealthy.

Maybe you've seen the new Home Depot commercials promoting a new Behr paint (www.BEHR.com/PremiumPlusUltra) that eliminates the need for primer. Those of you who are into paint know that primers and finish coat paints have very different properties and ingredients. Primer is intended to adhere to the unpainted surface, while paint is designed to adhere to the primer and provide external appearance properties. I have had no first hand experience with this product so I cannot say whether the claims are true, but let's look at painting (or more accurately from a TRIZ functional perspective, coating) from the standpoint of a system integration standpoint (another robust TRIZ tool). We know that systems will upward integrate and absorb/eliminate sub-systems over time. (Remember all the separate copying and fax machines we used to have?) This is what is happening here and if you are in the primer raw material business, your world may be changing. As in the above case, TRIZ does not predict timing of these events, only the general irreversible direction. In the case of the Behr paint, it appears that some nanotechnology is being used. This technology was not viable on a commercial scale ten years ago, but if you were a TRIZ oriented R&D Director at a paint company, you would know that upward system integration was going to happen and would keep an eye out for the enabling technology needed.

TRIZ principles are universal and can be applied in any technical or business situation that you have.