

TRIZ Elects a President

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Abstract

This paper presents selected examples of the authors' experiences in applying TRIZ to politics.

Introduction

In 1996 a presidential election campaign took place in a republic previously belonging to the former Soviet Union. A team of TRIZ specialists were involved in the campaign as a system analysis group and to provide decision-making support. The team dealt with strategic and tactical concepts, short-term predictions, ideas and text for campaign material, and solving of all non-trivial problems that arose in the management, technical, or communication areas.

During the first stage of the election campaign the group consulted for two competing candidates (this was possible due to a two-stage election system). Having parallel consulting projects allowed us to apply TRIZ tools and methodologies more effectively and to compare the results.

The first client (which we shall refer to as candidate "A") was an experienced politician and strong centrist leader. His goal was to win. The second client (candidate "B") was a new figure in the political arena. He wished to present himself and his party as a new political force. According to pre-election surveys he could achieve, at best, sixth place in the election.

As a result of the 1996 elections, candidate A became president. Candidate B finished in third place and became a political sensation. Below are several examples of applying TRIZ to the solving of election problems.

Problem 1 – The Poster

Candidate A's main opponent, candidate C (the former president), issued a poster that was widely distributed. The poster, which included a large portrait of C along with various political slogans, delivered a strong impression: candidate C looked like a true Father of the Nation – one of the common people, but smart and wise. The poster was printed on high quality paper in quantities that allowed it to be seen all over the country. No other candidate (including A) could afford to print so many expensive posters. Our assistance was vitally important.

Contradiction:

The poster provides a positive impression due to its overall high cost . . . but should make a negative impression because it is so expensive (the average citizen was very poor).

Applied TRIZ tool:

1. Ideal Ultimate Result: The poster itself should make a negative impression.
2. Main Resource: Lack of money.
3. TRIZ operator "Counteract the harmful effect" (partial): *Neutralize the harmful effect with a countering effect [1, 2].*

Solution concepts:

The following suggestions were made:

1. Print a leaflet on poor-quality, inexpensive paper (it should look handmade or as if it were manufactured on a primitive printing machine), to include:
 - three short expressive phrases describing the terrible results of C's political activity during his presidency
 - three illustrations (simple drawings or photos) depicting the above phrases
 - on the bottom of the paper, in the middle, one large word – "**ENOUGH!**" – visible from a distance
2. Paste the leaflets near C's posters (the best position is underneath the poster).
3. It is not necessary to print a large number of leaflets – if the leaflets are relatively scarce they will prompt more active discussion.
4. The entire operation (printing and pasting) should be done very quickly, while the impression engendered by C's poster is still in effect.

The authors observed not only the implementation of their solution, but its consequences as well. The most touching was a sample of the leaflet presented to the authors by their neighbor as evidence of the real "voice of people."

Problem 2 – What to do with too many VIPs?

Candidate A's staff had accumulated an excess of VIPs. Most were high-ranking bureaucrats with powerful, longstanding connections. They wished to play an important role in making decisions for A but with no responsibility for the consequences, of course!

Contradiction:

These VIPs could not be discounted as they held a certain amount of influence on the electorate. However, their propositions were ridiculous and thus unusable.

Applied TRIZ tool:

1. The main resource of the VIPs was their ability to create documents.
2. The classical way of resolving a contradiction "in space" is to insulate the undesirable part within the system.

Solution concept:

It was recommended that a "political council" be created for the VIPs, to be implemented as an element of the staff structure. The impressive title was aimed at the sensitive egos of the VIPs, who would submit their suggestions to the National Program for Economic Development. The political council was not subject to time constraints or any other restrictions. Suggestions, if provided, would be accepted into the program on a selective basis. The VIPs were completely occupied by this "important" activity and therefore did not hinder the work of others.

Problem 3 – Too many VIPs, again

A similar situation to problem 2 appeared in the camp of candidate B. This time, however, it involved a group of meticulous party veterans who were highly critical of the younger staff members (i.e., everyone else on the staff). This situation added tension to the already stressful environment of the election campaign. Contrary to the VIPs in problem 2, most of these people were not motivated by selfish ambition – they were simply active and honest citizens trying to do their best.

Applied TRIZ-tool:

1. The main resources of the meticulous party veterans: honesty; political activity.
2. TRIZ operator "Redirect the effect at another object": *Focus the source of a negative effect on another object; this will protect the object previously exposed to the effect. For this purpose, try:*
 - placing the source closer to the object
 - transporting the effective part of the source to the object
 - turning the source in the required direction

Solution concept:

The party veterans were assigned a "critically important" task – to be on hand in all electoral districts in order to reveal any activities prohibited by the election laws. This way everyone could be completely assured that the law would be observed! The punctilious veterans would not forget their duties and, of course, would never be late. Their careful scrutiny would ensure that every voting slip and every transporting ballot box was safe from tampering.

In a post-communist country whose democratic traditions were young, this was a serious task. And because it was not an ordinary procedure but rather a single-party initiative, time-consuming preparations were required to create and disseminate instructions for identifying voting offences and

handling them as prescribed under the law.

Problem 4 – Undesired Meeting

The staff of candidate C (candidate A's main opponent) decided to call a meeting of C supporters at the Square of National Agreement.

The Square of National Agreement is the country's main square. In the memories of its citizens this square is associated with the country's most important historical events, in particular, with the announcement of independence. The candidate who holds a meeting in the Square of National Agreement therefore makes a deep impression on the people – it will appear as if the entire nation supports him. Clearly, this event was undesirable for candidate A.

The following information also needed to be considered: holding a meeting at the Square of National Agreement required permission from the appropriate municipal authorities. According to the information we received, C's application was submitted in time for permission to be granted. In addition, the municipal authorities were among C's supporters.

Contradiction:

A meeting was to take place because it had been approved by the municipality and was organized appropriately. The meeting should not take place, however, because it could harmfully impact candidate A's popularity.

Applied TRIZ tool:

Anticipatory Failure Determination (AFD) method, part 4: "Prevent/Eliminate the Failure" [3].

Solution concepts (partial):

The resulting recommendations were arranged into three main scenarios:

- A. Preliminary measures
- B. Direct measures
- C. Measures for reducing harmful effects

A. Preliminary measures

1. The following question should be posed at the next session of Parliament: The Square of National Agreement is a sacred place in the eyes of the nation. Should activities to support a particular party or politician be permitted there?
2. The following resolution should be submitted for approval: Any political activity held in the square, with the exception of All-National meetings, should be forbidden.

3. Candidate A should announce an initiative to organize a United National meeting with all candidates present, to be held at the same place and time (or earlier) than the meeting of C supporters. Should C eschew the United National meeting it would appear as if he were opposed to national unity.
4. Leak information concerning the above preliminary measures, and prevent any action by C's staff related to the meeting of C supporters.

B. Direct Measures

Should the preliminary measures prove ineffective, the following recommendations should be carried out:

1. Organize a meeting of retired, poor and disabled people to be held at the same time near the presidential palace (C's residence). Demand C's presence at the meeting as the politician responsible for the country's current situation.
2. Invite independent reporters to C's meeting at the Square of National Agreement in order to obtain pictures and interviews.

C. Measures to reduce harmful consequences

In addition to direct measures, the following recommendations were made:

1. Publish in newspapers and broadcast on television the reports from C's meeting, for the purpose of alerting the electorate's attention to the following:
 - the meeting included only C's supporters
 - the meeting was not well attended
 - the speeches included aggressive statements
 - aggressive actions or intentions were demonstrated by C's supporters
2. Publish and broadcast reports of the alternative meeting.

Conclusions

A few selected examples of the authors' experiences in applying TRIZ to the area of political consulting have been presented. The following conclusions can be drawn:

- Our colleagues I. Kholkin, L. Novickova, V. Sibiriakov and others started applying TRIZ to politics in the early 1990s, collaborating with candidates who became Parliament deputies, future mayors and governors. The consulting project provided by the authors during the 1996 election campaign was the first application of TRIZ to support top-level politicians – i.e., presidential candidates.
- Due to the systemic nature of most TRIZ tools and methods (AFD, ARIZ, operators, separation principles, resources, etc.), TRIZ is as effective in politics as it is in industry. Moreover, it provides a powerful antidote to psychological inertia while stimulating creativity.
- A distinctive feature of election consulting is the quick application of solutions and visibility of results. The "solution providers" can see how their recommendations were used and estimate their effectiveness in a real environment.



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- Even when recommendations are implemented only partially or in a less suitable fashion effective results can occur. The reason for this is that TRIZ solutions are highly reliable; furthermore, the competition lacks the same or even similar solutions.

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