

## Delta Discovers TRIZ



Now I know many of you travel as much as I do and witness the chaos that frequently occurs in airports with tight connections (especially in large hub airports) and with what seems to be more overbooked flights. Now Delta is not a client of mine, but all TRIZ folks see example after example of TRIZ principles being used without their being known and we always ask, "why not sooner?". It's generally not a new problem being solved.

### Problem #1:

Tight connections. Now Delta used to have enough money and spirit that they had "red coats" meeting all flights and all you had to do was mention your next flight and the "red coat", with their list in hand, would immediately tell you your next gate and where it was. Nowadays we have to wander down the corridor a while to find one of those infinitely long flight lists, find our flight, and figure out where the new gate is. Now ask yourself, why do 150 people on a typical flight need to know where EVERYONE is going and where EVERYONE's next gate is?

Well, they don't. If you have flown Delta over the past few months connecting in Atlanta, you have seen a screen as you exit your plane which contains ONLY the connecting gates for those who are on that plane! The TRIZ principle of "local quality" or separation upon condition, whichever way you prefer to look at it. You can also use your old contradiction table and look up the conflict between function efficiency and time and, guess what, find the problem solving principle of "local quality".

### Problem #2:

Overbooked flights. All airlines have some kind of scheme (business practice?) for when they anticipate overbooked flights. Some kind of algorithm has been developed which calculates the odds and then the gate agent starts a bidding war to see who will take how much money to take the next flight. The amount of money is predetermined by the airline and its algorithm. All of this causes flight delays and gate agents having to fill out all kinds of paperwork to issue new ticket vouchers.

Those of you who fly Delta may have noticed that, over the past few months, something interesting has happened. If a flight looks like it is overbooked, an Email is sent to passengers (all????) the day before, asking them how much money they would take to fly on a later flight. My observation over the past few months is that these amounts (you click the box and return the Email) are about half the size of the amounts previously offered at the gate. You can also fill in the blank if you don't like Delta's choices. What I have seen on these flights is there have NO delays and no announcements regarding volunteers. What a time and cost saver!

Though I haven't volunteered yet, I can easily imagine, if not enough folks volunteer, that a second Email goes out with higher prices until enough people are found. How ingenious! Once again, using our 60+ year old contradiction table, we can ask how do we improve productivity (we don't want gate agents wasting their time with all this nonsense) against loss of time. And what is one of the principles suggested? DO IT IN ADVANCE.

Happy traveling and keep your eyes open for TRIZ examples you can use!

Next TRIZ classes are in Minneapolis, 4/28-30, and Houston, June 2-4:  
<http://www.innovation-triz.com/events/>