

trivago and TRIZ



No doubt most of you have seen the TV ads for trivago ©, the company that advertises its ability to search everyone else's web sites for hotel prices, saving you the trouble of searching some combination of hotel web sites and other travel web sites. In concept it's no different than what other web sites offer to do for airline travel and rental cars. What is the TRIZ principle here that we see being used in a business context?

It's "upward system integration", one of the key and most often used TRIZ lines of evolution. These lines are predictive in nature meaning that they forecast, in a general way, what will happen to products and businesses over time. How do we know this? Through the analysis of millions of patents and business trends.

Think back to travel in the good old days. You called each of the airlines to find their fares. Then travel agents came along to do that for you. Then Travelocity ©, Orbitz ©, and others came along to do this for you and them. Now we have search engines to search the search engines! Think about this principle more broadly--it is not unique to the travel business nor business. How many "machines" are in your office? The one (not 3) on my desk copies, scans, and faxes. Your computer is now a phone. Your phone is also a camera. My daily newspapers are wrapped in plastic ads. My airline seat has ads all around it and on the napkins.

Your shampoos are also conditioners. Your soap may have caffeine in it. We have building products that not only insulate, but also isolate from noise. All of these examples, in addition to illustrating this line, also illustrate a negative effect on another business whose products are not needed any more. How much less plastic is used in the office machines, phones, and bathroom toiletry bottles?

Since we KNOW these trends will happen and continue, here are the questions you need to be asking yourself:

1. How could the product or service you provide be incorporated into the product or service provided by your customer? What would the impact be? How could you assist in making this happen? (It's going to happen with or without you).
2. How could you increase the functionality of your product or service, eliminating the need for your customer to buy other products or services? What could your suppliers do to assist you in achieving this?  
Where else have you seen this principle in use or affecting business or products in a significant way?

I will be making several presentations at the Global Conference on Systematic Innovation (<http://www.systematic-innovation.org/icsi/icsi2014/>) in San Jose, CA. This is the first time that this major Chinese group has held their conference in the US.

Our next public TRIZ classes for ASME and AIChE are in Atlanta (October 6-8) and San Diego (November 3-5): <http://www.aiche.org/resources/education/courses/pd513/april-2014>