

TRIZ diaries

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As the end of year approached it was time yet again to think about next year's diary. Still an advocate of the little book rather than electronic wizardry, I looked around for a 2004 diary and became a little disappointed at what I saw, Nothing new there. So I thought why not use TRIZ to make a diary of my own. So here again, not quite 'everyday TRIZ', is a TRIZ evaluation and invention of a diary 2004.

Function

First, I corrected myself on thinking the diary is there to 'store information'. Change is of course the key word in TRIZ, so what change does a diary produce, when, where, how and to whom?

The main agent changed of course will be me. The diary is there to change my behaviour. A key feature of this change process is date related. The usual access system which ties in this function is a storage of information in a sequence of dates, with some variations as to whether the view pages are for a single day, or a week, starting at the weekend or Monday. TRIZ would of course suggest there is a lot of underutilised resource given such a uniform system, and indeed most people's diaries will have lots of blank spaces and maybe some pages where you can't hold enough information.

Of course a comparison with other data storage systems like computers suggests a much more flexible arrangement, basically making stacks as the information comes in. Easier to do on a computer maybe, but maybe it is possible with paper/book format?

Some information is not date related, so there are some phone numbers of family and close friends, bank details, and other stuff.

The primary function is retrieval, but of course for retrieval to occur I need to put information in, so I have to consider this unless I employ a personal secretary, which is hardly the solution in this exercise!

Any Contradictions here? Of course, yes. I would like to just write information on the next clean page. And I would like the information I need to be on the first page of the diary, or perhaps on whatever page I open the diary on (a lovely magic solution idea).

TRIZZERS will of course happily offer Segmentation as an option to consider, so let's examine that one first.

My first page could be an index of where all the information is throughout the diary. The remaining pages could then have information added as it is received. The end of the diary could, like many diaries, have the non-date related information.

One problem with this might be that I would quite like related information to be in one section, so that for a series of training courses all the information is in that section. Segmentation occurs again as a good option. So my dairy has several

segments, a front page or two for an index, sections for different 'jobs', a general set of notes as and when diary information is added and a final section for non-date related stuff.

All this seems fairly standard so far, so let's explore a few more TRIZ options.

Colour – yes, a good idea to colour code sections for easy access and make it look nice!

Move to a new dimension – maybe the notes should be in landscape not portrait?

Inexpensive short life – maybe I can just remove pages that are past their use by date?

Harm to benefit – if I am to remove pages which are out of date, then I am probably only going to use one side, so the other side could be for fun, pictures, doodles, I might even sell them!

Local quality – on reflection this tells me that the key page is the first one, the index, so I should pay special attention to that page to make the whole system work.

I should also consider trends of evolution in design of course.

At the moment all my pages have straight edges so I could cut corners, shape edges, just be playful with the pages prior to use and after use.

Index Page

Key functions of the index page are:

To pass information to me on page numbers of notes made

To provide a summary of activity levels over all time periods (week to view etc.), to include activity type, maybe location, company

Contradictions: Extent of information (amount of substance - 26) and ease/convenience of use (33) – in storing and retrieving – which gives Principles 39 (Inert Environment), 29 (Pneumatics), 25 (Self Service), 10 (Prior Action)

TRIZ and information I find requires a more thorough review of the Principles that work with physical objects. So why does an inert environment resolve a contradiction between amount and convenience of use? And pneumatics, how does that work?

Prior Action is easy to see for information, because how you encrypt information makes storage easier or more compact, and self service should be an easy concept, with a coding system which delivers more than one function – e.g. if I call a task an elephant task I am telling myself that it is both large and can involve a lot of work.

So, for my index, I will invent a coding which is self serving, and the style and choice of how to do the layout will be a Prior Action requirement maybe some experiments.

But Pneumatics and Inertness? I can see how pneumatics works with physical substances, from a hydrogen balloon being used to carry large loads to an air flow being used to move tonnes of powder. So the Principle works because of the other

Principle, Segmentation. For my data I am not trying to move it, just to store it and have it easy to locate, large amounts of it all on one page. Interestingly Volume of Non Moving Object and Convenience of Use does not have any Principles labelled, so in one sense maybe I need to Invent my way round this? Pneumatics does give me the idea of blowing something up in size, so this leads to the idea of magnification! I have a sheet map magnifier so I will try this. Segmentation also gives me the idea of coloured dots, so I will apply a work planner concept with a magnification concept and see how that works.

I am keen to think through the idea of Inert Environment though, as I find the Principles you have trouble applying often eventually give you the best ideas.

An Inert Environment works for a large quantity of materials and ease of use I guess because you can do things to the materials and they are not damaged even if you do bad things to them, like move them around quickly, which in other environments might set them alight. Can I think of my page as being inert, so that I can do things without damage? If I write in ink this is high damage to the page, and I can't 'move' the information around. But if I had a set of pencils from very soft to fairly hard I could manage the movement of data better. To avoid loss of information I will also apply the Principle, Thin Films, and put a sheet in my diary to cover up the pencil entries when I am not 'moving' them!

Summary

As with many innovations, the newness in itself is not so staggering, but the process of evaluating what it is you want will in itself lead to change. This year my diary has been a passive agent, not dynamically linked to my record keeping, its purpose and Function! Next year my diary will form part of my thinking and reflecting process, it will perform more than one Function, which is surely good TRIZ!

Happy New Year!

Graham