Some Results of the 1996 and 2000 Moldovan Presidential Elections

Vladimir Proseanic and Svetlana Visnepolschi

Presented at TRIZCON 2002 in April 2002.

CONTENTS

Abstract

This paper discusses some results of applying TRIZ during the 1996 and 2000 presidential elections in Moldova. The authors were involved in the 1996 election campaign as a group of decision makers supporting two candidates (one of whom won the election in 1996; the other won in 2000). In 1996, TRIZ tools and methods were applied in a presidential election campaign for the first time.

A few selected problems and recommended solutions presented in our previous paper address this same topic. In this article, however, we will discuss how TRIZ was applied to running the campaign of two candidates at the same time. Also discussed is the impact that similar TRIZ tools have on different personalities.

1. Some specifics of TRIZ election consulting

In 1996 the authors and their colleagues, Dr. V. Timoschenco and Dr. V. Oleynikov, organized a consulting group to apply TRIZ tools to the presidential election campaign in Moldova. The leader of the group, Vladimir Proseanic, was experienced in both TRIZ problem solving and TRIZ management, which was a unique combination of knowledge in that field. (Mr. Proseanic was CEO of the first professional TRIZ company from 1986 to 1997.)

At that time TRIZ was more or less known to Russian engineers; however, it was entirely unknown to politicians [1] [2]. Considering the high rank of our potential customers, we did not have the opportunity to explain TRIZ methods to them directly. On the contrary, any attempt to present to them something unique and unknown to the Western world would only be met with criticism and rejection. Moreover, we realized that the results of our work would be judged on the basis of common sense, not on the basis of the paradoxical TRIZ philosophy. Therefore, we were obliged to keep the theory to ourselves and deliver "pure" solutions only.

There is another important aspect related to consulting for high-ranking politicians. Because the client should accept your recommendations directly (rather than through intermediaries), each solution concept must satisfy the following criteria:

- Complete elimination of the problem
- Plain description (no specific terminology)
- The entire document, no matter what it includes, should not exceed two-thirds of a page in large print. Otherwise, it would immediately be consigned with other "very important papers" … forever!
- The solution(s) should consider completely the abilities (resources!) and intentions (resources!) of the customer.

But there was good news about election consulting. As every TRIZ specialist knows, all TRIZ consulting projects – whether technological or business-related – are associated with a significant drawback: once the project is finished, we seldom receive feedback from the customer. And without information regarding a customer's utilization of our solutions, we must estimate the effectiveness of our work indirectly using such statements as "the customer is happy," "the customer gives us good references," or "the customer awarded us another project." In the best case, the customer's success increases after our consulting. This fact, however, can not exclude the possibility that the customer simply started working harder under competitive pressure.

The critical features of election consulting are:

- rapid application of solutions
- visibility of results

Accepted recommendations can be implemented within weeks or even days, and are often evident in the mass media. Therefore, we could observe directly how our solutions were used and thereby determine their effectiveness in the real world.

Due to various circumstances, our customers for the 1996 election often chose to implement our solutions only partially. We were also surprised to observe that some of our solutions were implemented against our recommendations. More astonishing was the fact that these solutions were successful anyway due to the high systemic (excessive) nature of TRIZ solutions. No doubt such successes were due in part to the fact that the opposing candidates had nothing comparable to the solutions that TRIZ offered.

2. Ideal Ultimate Result and conceptual model

We offered our services to two of the three main candidates. One rejected our offer because he considered himself strong enough to win without special decision-making support. And indeed, public opinion for him was unanimous. Moreover, he had confidant advisers who didn't want competition from "outsiders." The other candidate accepted our offer because at the beginning of the campaign he had strong doubts as to his prospects for winning.

Within two weeks we received another request, from the candidate who was ranked as least likely to win. This candidate had only recently appeared on the political scene and represented an unpopular political party – he was therefore not taken seriously by the general public. After careful consideration we decided to accept the request as legally and morally appropriate, due to:

- The country's two-stage election procedure and the different campaign goals of our customers. In other words, they were not directly competing against each other.

- The two candidates had no reason to collaborate due to differences in their political platforms. Collaboration would only reduce the popularity of both candidates.

Thus we had the opportunity to compare how different personalities apply analogical TRIZ solutions.

We started by creating a conceptual model for each candidate's staff. (Later, we confirmed that such a model should be created at the onset of any management procedure – election campaign, business establishment, reorganization, etc.) The first step in creating the model was to formulate the Ideal Ultimate Result (IUR) of the election campaign for each candidate and for his/her staff. When formulating the IUR, we took into consideration the political plans of the candidate and of his supporting political movement, as well as his/her professional and personal intentions and hopes. Simply stated, the IUR in an election need not be the presidency and may sufficiently differ from the goal indicated by the candidate.

If, however, the candidate does not accept the suggested IUR or comprehends it differently, it is highly unlikely that his opinion can be changed. In such situations reason would dictate that the consultant refrain from grand expectations for this election campaign.

On the basis of the formulated IUR, a functional model of the staff was created (Figure 1).

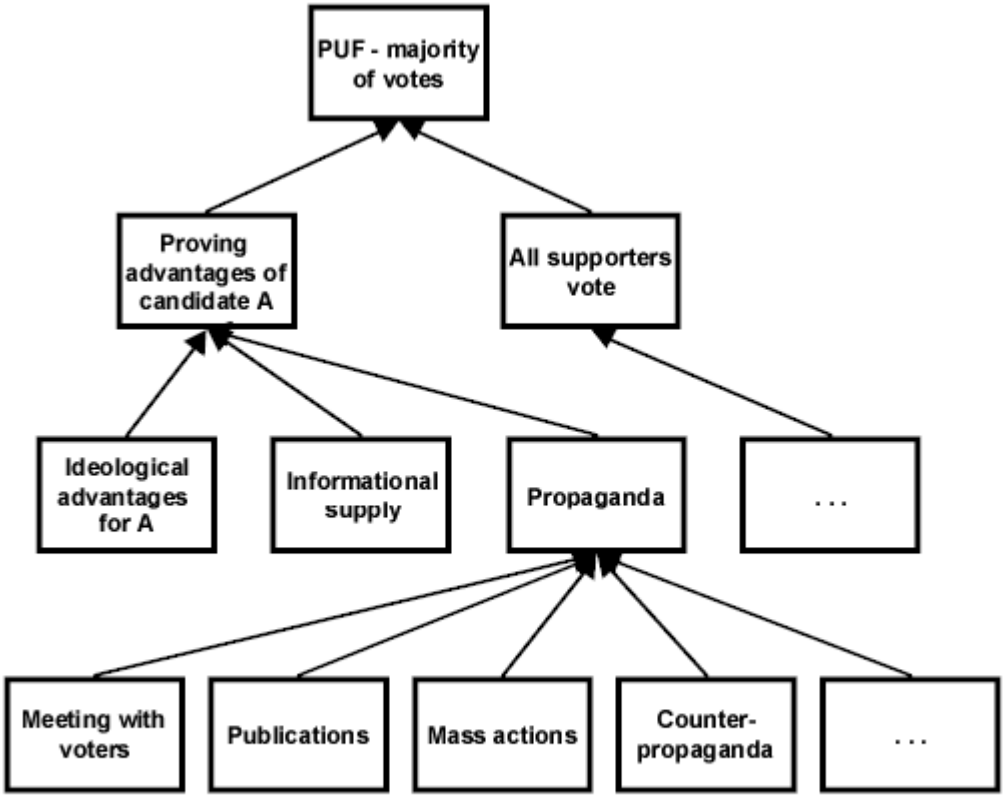

Figure 1. Staff Functions During Election Campaign

The functional model included only those functions necessary and sufficient to achieve the IUR. The analysis of the functions allows for the creation of a simple structural model (Figure 2) that satisfies the following criteria:

- no more than three subordination levels
- every function is charged to a specific responsible person
- every team member receives a list of personal duties
- all key people know where to obtain information and have direct contact with the staff leader

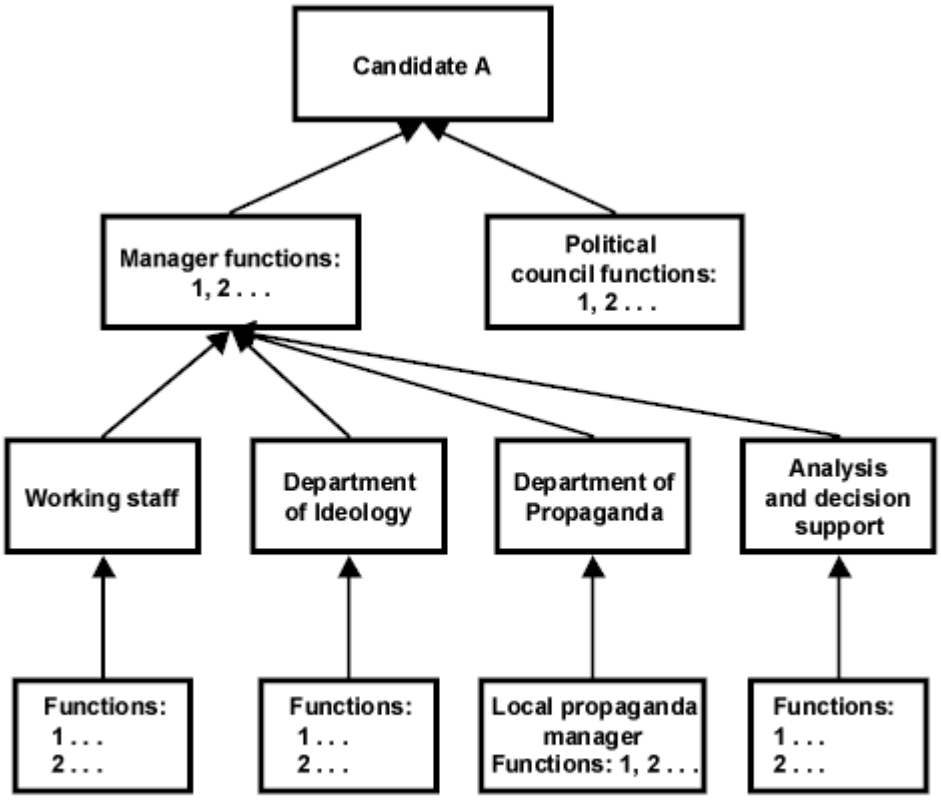

Figure 2. Staff Structure During Election Campaign

The structural model was received by the candidates in different ways. Candidate A didn't want to accept it at first, but with time and under pressure from his regional staff, his team understood the necessity of the model. Candidate B simply said "okay" and started entering specific names into the diagram boxes. (It can be said that candidate B's staff, having fewer resources by far, worked much more effectively.)

As a rule, the right structure can resolve many additional problems. The most important one is that the functional-structural model (in addition to the Patterns of System Evolution) can become an analytical tool for the short-term prediction of the campaign's evolution:

Using published information (newspaper articles and digests) it is easy to identify which structural elements in the opponent's staff function poorly or don't exist at all. In this way we can try to predict the opponent's next steps, then take these into consideration when planning the actions to be undertaken by our customer.

3. Creating the bi-system

A key conflict we revealed and resolved at the beginning of the election campaign was the contradiction that existed between the intentions of several candidates. In particular, candidate D, the strong centrist leader, expected to gain the complete support of the liberal forces during the first stage of the campaign. In his opinion, the left-wing candidates should withdraw from the election on his behalf. The other candidates had their own plans, however.

The typical evolution of such a conflict during an election often leads to increased pressure on one side and a confrontational reaction on the other side. According to the Patterns of System Evolution, competing systems can often be combined. We therefore suggested that instead of fighting these conflicts, a method of indirect interaction based on the principle "Bi-system with shifted properties" be employed. The main idea was the following:

The pre-election actions of a "bi-system" (composed of Candidate D and the left-wing candidate, for example) should add to and amplify each other, while the specific political direction of each candidate should be maintained.

This would effectively prepare the public for the union of these candidates in the second stage of the election.

The main benefit of the "Bi-system with shifted properties" type of collaboration is that it allows the interests of both participants to be maintained naturally. Moreover, this kind of system gives enables every participant to most effectively use his/her resources and present the candidate to the electorate in the most natural and attractive way.

The suggested scheme included a list of main properties for which special changes ("shifts") had been introduced. As time went on, we kept on adding to this list based on new information received, new actions required, and changes to the staff.

EXAMPLE: Determining the order in which candidates visit various regions

To arrange the tour schedule for both candidates in the bi-system model, these steps should be followed:

1. Divide the map of the country or region into sections according to the main political preferences of the majority of the population.

2. Plan the routes for the "left" candidate starting with the areas where the electorate is most skeptical. During those visits, the "left" candidate may strictly criticize right-wing politicians. Expressive and sincere speech effectively destroys the opponents' positions while activating a part of the electorate.

3. Plan the routes for the moderate candidate, who is a proponent of positive ideas, so that he/she arrives next at the above-mentioned region. This will maximize the success of his/her presentation.

4. Take into consideration that in the left-oriented regions the moderate candidate might perform his actions before the left candidate.

4. Applying the Anticipatory Failure Determination (AFD) method

Most of the problems connected with undesirable phenomena had been solved by applying the Anticipatory Failure Determination (AFD) method. At the time the first prototype (in Russian) of the AFD software existed and was effectively utilized. Two examples of the AFD process were presented in [Reference 3].

Conclusion

The experience gained showed us that TRIZ could be successfully applied under conditions that are often considered hopeless:

- to a wide variety of "non-technological" problems
- with uneducated customers, who moreover are unwilling to be educated
- with solution concepts required each week (sometimes more often)
- with presentations limited to one page and without verbal comments

The same TRIZ tools applied to similar problems, but for different users, will likely yield different solutions. However, when a solution is implemented – either partially, contrary to recommendations, or in an otherwise unsuitable way, the implementation can provide visible, effective results, because:

- a good TRIZ solution is highly reliable
- other competitors lack such solutions (compromised though they might be)

When considering whether to offer consulting services to a politician, it is probably unwise to rely exclusively on political preferences (both yours and the candidate's). Rather, to effectively implement the kind of non-trivial solutions obtainable with TRIZ tools, the following characteristics are much more important in a politician:

- Willingness to accept new ideas and to learn in general
- Ability to work hard and to effectively manage the work of others
- Self-criticism, strong character and morals (especially an intolerance to lies)

It is not necessary for the TRIZ consulting group to become part of a candidate's team. Indeed, it is more effective to maintain an independent position, avoiding involvement in the traditional intrigues of the election process.

In the first stage of election campaign (assuming a two-stage election system), you may consult several candidates at once. This will allow you to more effectively apply the TRIZ tools as well as compare the results.

Conduct that is wrong in principle -- and sometimes dangerous -- is the following:

- Concealing the knowledge of your collaboration with one candidate from your other customers
- Using confidential information received from one staff against any other politician during the election campaign, or afterwards
- Consulting direct political opponents at the same time

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank their colleagues Dr. Victor Timoschenko and Dr. Vladimir Oleinikov, who were members of the consulting team and worked on the project together with the authors.

References

1. *TRIZ in Progress; Transactions of the Ideation Research Group*, Ideation International Inc., 1999.
2. "Examples of the Election Stratagems in Israel," Jacob Skir, TRIZ Journal (www.triz-journal.com), March and April, 2000.
3. "TRIZ Elects a President," Vladimir Proseanic and Svetlana Visnepolschi (first published in the April, 2000 issue of the TRIZ Journal (www.triz-journal.com).

About the Authors

Vladimir Proseanic received an MS in mechanics from Kishinev Polytechnic Institute, Moldova in 1979. He became a student of Genrich Altshuller, the founder of TRIZ, in 1981, and was later one of the founders of the Kishinev TRIZ school. He was CEO of the Kishinev company Progress, the first company to provide professional TRIZ services. Mr. Proseanic has solved more than 1000 innovative problems for various industries and is one of the most experienced TRIZ professionals in applying TRIZ to business and management problems. Mr. Proseanic managed several projects involving the application of TRIZ to solving problems in banking (including information protection systems and decision-making support for revealing prospective investment directions). He was the manager in the application of TRIZ to decision-making consulting in an election campaign. Mr. Proseanic is a winner of the Soviet Union's National awards in science and innovation; he has 15 SU author certificates and has authored numerous publications. He is currently a project manager and one of the leading consultants for Ideation International.

Svetlana Visnepolschi received an MS in electronics from the Leningrad Institute of Precision Mechanics and Optics in 1976. She became a student of Genrich Altshuller, the founder of TRIZ, in 1983. One of her early contributions to TRIZ is the creation of a working algorithm for TRIZ resources (together with B. Zlotin). She later pioneered various projects in the application of TRIZ prediction methods to the development of both industrial systems and businesses, including the Moscow Stock and Commodity Exchange and the election campaign. Ms. Visnepolschi has taught TRIZ for more than 15 years and has authored a book and numerous publications. Since 1985, she has developed and applied the TRIZ-based Anticipatory Failure Determination (AFD) methodology. Since 1997, she has been a project manager for Ideation International and the designer of Ideation's AFD System software.