



Keyword: Diffusion

# The Diffusion of Innovation and Your Change Planning

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by Kevin Eikenberry

The Diffusion of Innovation theory was formalized by Everett Rogers, and it has given tremendous clues for leaders of change ever since.

The theory describes five groups and their predictable adoption of any change. These five groups are:

- Innovators – the first to adopt a change – approximately 2.5% of the population
- Early adopters – the second group – approximately 13.5% of the population
- Early majority – the first part of the majority to adopt the change – 34% of the population
- Late majority – the back half of the majority to adopt the change – 34% of the population
- Laggards – the last segment to adopt a change – 16% of the population

Each of these groups has characteristics that set them apart from the other groups. Here is a short synopsis of each:

## Innovators

- Adventurous; desire for the rash, the daring, and the risky.
- Have the ability to cope with a high degree of uncertainty about an innovation.
- Have substantial financial resources to absorb possible loss from an unprofitable innovation. (This won't apply in every situation.)

## Early adopters

- Often have the greatest degree of opinion leadership in most systems.
- Serve as role model for other members of the group or organization.
- Respected by peers.
- Generally successful in the organization.

## Early majority

- Interact frequently with peers.
- Rarely hold positions of opinion leadership.
- Deliberate carefully before adopting a new idea.



## The Diffusion of Innovation and Your Change Planning (continued)

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Late majority

- Cautious
- Skeptical
- Watch other groups for direction, but proceed with caution.

Laggards

- Not opinion leaders.
- Often isolated by some factor.
- Keep their point of reference in the past.
- Generally suspicious of innovations.
- Have a lengthy and complex decision making process.
- Risk averse.

### How to Use This Information

As a leader, this time tested theory is very valuable. When implementing any change read over these grouping and descriptions. Beyond that review consider these factors when leading or championing a change.

- **Be patient.** Recognize that not everyone will come on board with a change at the same time - this theory both proves it and gives you a model for understanding that fact.
- **Target your communication.** Because not every group thinks in the same way about change, different factors are important to different groups. Communicate in ways that meet the needs and help influence each group.
- **Be realistic.** Not everyone thinks about change the way you do!
- **Use other groups to help.** Enlist the help of peers who have already adopted the change to help influence others. The later groups look to their peers who have already adopted the change to help them make their own decision.

These tips, along with everything else you have learned in the Remarkable Leaders Champion Change chapter, will help you lead change much more effectively.



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