

Handout: Diffusion of Innovations Parables

Story time Parable: The Stainless Steel Church

(From Seminar Two, Resources page @ www.disciplewalk.com)

The Chairman of the Administrative Board called the meeting to order. "We have a problem," he announced gravely, "with mice. They are gnawing holes in the wood and getting into the church."

The innovator had an unusual idea. "If we tore down the old church and built a new one out of stainless steel, the mice couldn't gnaw their way in."

The early adopter saw the advantages. "We would certainly be in the forefront of all the churches in our conference in using this new material to build a church. Just think: it would never rust, never need painting, and last forever."

The middle adopter was practical. "Wouldn't it be very hard to work with steel as a building material? You'd have to weld everything. And it wouldn't be cheap."

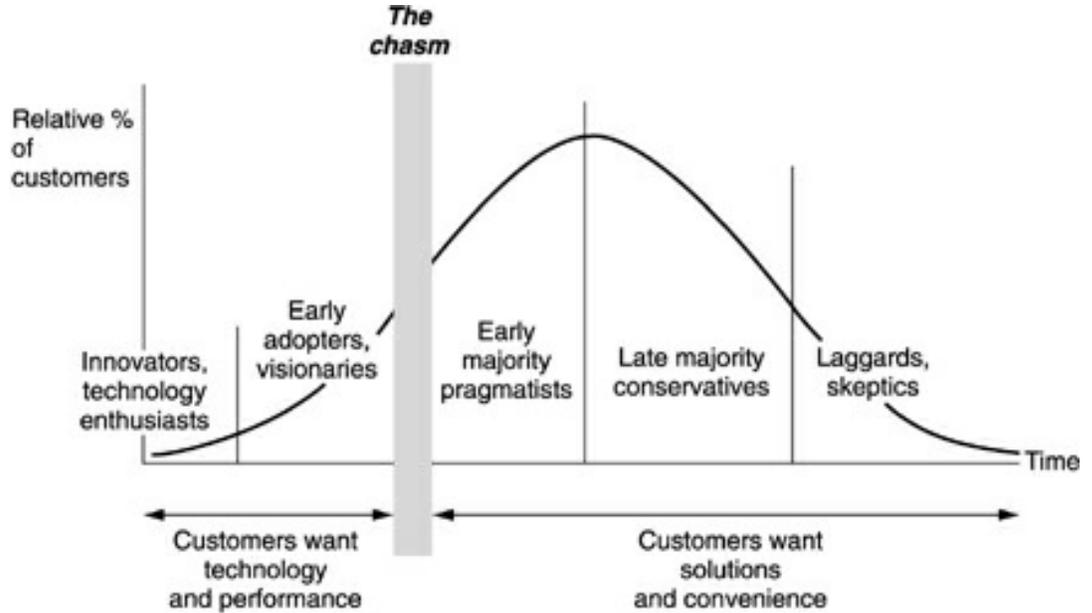
The late adopter was nostalgic. "I would miss the old church of wood. It seems so comfortable and warm to me. Wouldn't steel be expensive to heat in winter?"

The laggard harrumphed. "My sister has too many cats on her farm. I'll bring one over tomorrow and it won't cost us a nickel."

"Well, I see we've solved that problem," the chair noted. "Now, on to the next problem."

Across the Diffusion of Innovations Adopter Framework...

Who do you know in this adopter category, inside or outside the church?



INNOVATIVE MINORITY (Reinforcing Process)

Innovators or Technology Enthusiasts _____%

Pastor: There's a light bulb burnt out in the sanctuary. Can you help?

Innovator: If you'll just be patient, my nuclear fusion bulb will be at the prototype stage real soon now. Never needs changing and uses no electricity.

Early Adopters or Visionaries _____%

Pastor: There's a light bulb burnt out in the sanctuary. Can you help?

Early Adopter: Has anyone analyzed whether it's in our best interests to spend the extra money on those long lasting bulbs?

PRAGMATIC MAJORITY (Balancing Process)

Middle Adopters (Early Majority) or Pragmatists _____%

Pastor: There's a light bulb burnt out in the sanctuary. Can you help?

Middle Adopter: Sure. (Gets ladder, puts new bulb in.)

Late Adopters (Late Majority) or Conservatives _____%

Pastor: There's a light bulb burnt out in the sanctuary. Can you help?

Late Adopter: Are you sure we need a new bulb? There's nothing wrong with the old bulb. Give it a chance. My mother gave that bulb to the church as a memorial to my grandfather; see the plaque next to the fixture? Have you tried praying for healing for the bulb? Where is your faith?

Laggards or Skeptics _____%

Pastor: There's a light bulb burnt out in the sanctuary. Can you help?

Laggard: After a while, the truly faithful really begin to sense God at work in the dark. Perhaps God prefers the dark. When God wants a new bulb, He will change it Himself. Stop interfering with the will of the Lord with your devilish desire to change everything!

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| Vote | Assume permission |
| Consensus | Interested volunteers |
| Announcement | Secret (by invitation only) |
| Change wholes | Change small groups |
| All at once | Slow Grow to critical mass |
| Big whacks (Axe) | Small cuts (saw) |
| Presentations | Conversations |
| Max drama/excite | Minimal anxiety/calmness |
| New, interesting | Pragmatic benefits, familiar |

Laggard Testimony #1

I took a break from writing for a couple of months to further research the "seeker-sensitive," "church-growth" movement; that tumorous plague that has become to the Christian community what AIDS is to the homosexual community. Those who have been infected always deny it publicly believing in their hearts they are righteous and extraordinary rather than depraved, dying and delusional . . .

You'll know that your church is becoming "seeker-sensitive" when the worship service begins to resemble an Amway convention run by pod people in polo shirts whose savior looks more like Bill Clinton with sunglasses and a saxophone than the Son of God hanging from a lonely cross for the sins of the world.

Laggard Testimony #2

I began to have grave concerns about the changes brought into my church by my pastor after he attended a pastors conference sponsored by Rick Warren's Saddleback Church. Eventually, my wife and I were forced to leave that church (amicably) after private meetings with our pastor and a couple of deacons. In our church, Rick Warren started a slippery slope that included a softened and shortened sermon, dropping the name "baptist" from the church name, putting the hymnals in the church attic, selling the organ, needing earplugs to attend praise and worship time, watching an unicyclist parade through the sanctuary, participating in a live, interactive congregational marketing survey during church service time and starting a building program when neither attendance nor the budget supported doing so. Sound familiar? If not, these seeker-sensitive things will soon be coming to your church if Rick Warren has his say. . . . This movement has hijacked evangelical Christianity over the past decade or so and has now displaced countless bible-believing Christians from their churches.

Light Bulb Instructions: Cut out slips at left, ask people to draw a role. After they read their part, they state the percentage of the framework.

Late Adopter Reading #1

Understanding Late Adopters: Many of the people who attend religious services in our society are not interested in theology, want nothing too exotic and dislike the idea of change. They find the established rituals provide them with a link with tradition and give them a sense of security. They do not expect brilliant ideas from the sermon and are disturbed by changes in the liturgy. In rather the same way, many of the pagans of the late antiquity loved to worship the ancestral gods, as generations had done before them. The old rituals gave them a sense of identity, celebrated local traditions and seemed an assurance that things would continue as they were.

Laggard Testimony #1

Late Adopter Reading #1

Laggard Testimony #2

Light bulb: Pastor

Light bulb: Innovator 2.5%

Light bulb: Early Adopter 13.5%

Light bulb: Middle Adopters 34%

Light bulb: Late Adopter 34%

Light bulb: Laggard 16%

