

Paper Code& Name – **403 Development Communications**

Course Instructor: **Mr. Ganesh Kumar Ranjan**

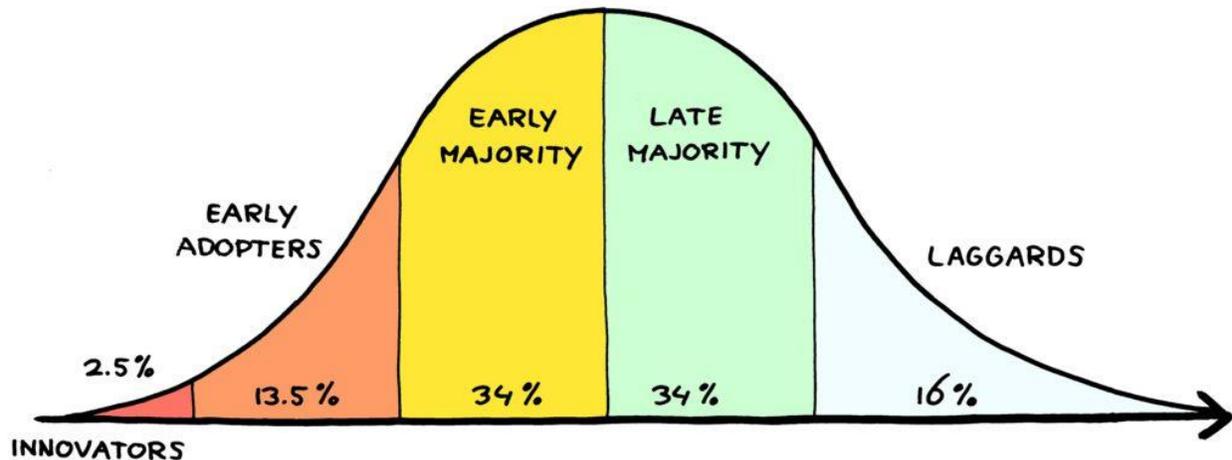
### **Diffusion of Innovation**

*Diffusion* is the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system. It is a special type of communication, in that the messages are concerned with new ideas.

*Communication* is a process in which participants create and share information with one another in order to reach a mutual understanding. This definition implies that communication is a process of convergence (or divergence) as two or more individuals exchange information in order to move toward each other (or apart) in the meanings that they ascribe to certain events. For an example, a client may come to the change agent with a problem or need, and the innovation is recommended as a possible solution. And if we look at the change agent-client interaction in a broader context, we may see that their interaction continues through several cycles, and is indeed a process of information exchange. So *diffusion is a special type of communication, in which the messages are concerned with a new idea. It is this newness of the idea in the message content of communication that gives diffusion its special character.* The newness means that some degree of uncertainty is involved

#### **Different user segments**

Diffusion researchers believe that a population can be broken down into five different segments, based on their propensity to adopt a specific innovation: *innovators, early adopters, early majorities, late majorities and laggards.*



Each group has its own “personality”, at least as far as its attitude to a particular innovation goes. When thinking about these groups, don’t imagine it’s your job to shift people from one segment to another. It doesn’t work that way. It’s best to think of the membership of each segment as *static*. Innovations spread when they evolve to meet the needs of successive segments.

**Innovators:** The adoption process begins with a tiny number of visionary, imaginative innovators. They often lavish great time, energy and creativity on developing new ideas and gadgets. And they love to talk about them. Right now, they’re the ones busily building stills to convert cooking oil into diesel fuel and making websites to tell the world about it. Unfortunately their one-eyed fixation on a new behaviour or gadget can make them seem dangerously idealistic to the pragmatic majority. Yet no change program can thrive without their energy and commitment.

**Early adopters:** Once the benefits start to become apparent, early adopters leap in. They are on the lookout for a strategic leap forward in their lives or businesses and are quick to make connections between clever innovations and their personal needs. They love getting an advantage over their peers and they have time and money to invest. They’re often fashion conscious and love to be seen as leaders: social prestige is one of their biggest drivers. Their natural desire to be trend setters causes the “take-off” of an innovation. Early adopters tend to be more economically successful, well connected and well informed and hence more socially respected. Their seemingly risky plunge into a new activity sets tongues wagging. Others watch to see whether they prosper or fail, and people start talking about the results. And early adopters like to talk

about their successes. So the buzz intensifies. What early adopters say about an innovation determines its success. The more they crow and preen, the more likely the new behaviour or product will be perceived positively by the majority of a population. Early adopters are vital for another reason. They become an independent test bed, ironing out the chinks and reinventing the innovation to suit mainstream needs. Fortunately early adopters are an easy audience. They don't need much persuading because they are on the lookout for anything that could give them a social or economic edge. When you call a public meeting to discuss energy-saving devices or new farming methods, they're the ones who come along. They're the first people in your block to install a water tank, mulch their garden, buy laptops for their kids, or install solar panels. Some authorities talk about a "chasm" between visionary early adopters and pragmatic majorities. They think the chasm explains why many products are initially popular with early adopters but crash and burn before they reach mass markets. Everett Rogers disagreed with the idea of a chasm. He thought early adopters and majorities formed a continuum. However *most* early adopters still have radically different interests and needs from *most* majorities, so even if there's no real chasm it's a useful mental construct that warns us against the easy assumption that one size fits all. Once again, what makes products or practices spread is not persuasion. It's the whether the product or behaviour is being reinvented to become easier, simpler, quicker, cheaper, and more advantageous.

**Early majority:** Assuming the product or behaviour leaps the chasm, it may eventually reach majority audiences. Early majorities are pragmatists, comfortable with moderately progressive ideas, but won't act without solid proof of benefits. They are followers who are influenced by mainstream fashions and wary of fads. They want to hear "industry standard" and "endorsed by normal, respectable folks". Majorities are cost sensitive and risk averse. They are looking for simple, proven, better ways of doing what they already do. They require guaranteed off-the-shelf performance, minimum disruption, minimum commitment of time, minimum learning, and either cost neutrality or rapid payback periods. And they hate complexity. They haven't got time to think about your product or project. They're too busy getting the kids to football and running their businesses. If they do have spare time they're not going to spend it fussing around with complicated, expensive, inconvenient products or behaviours. They want to hear "plug-and-play", "no sweat" or "user-friendly" and "value for money".

**Late majority:** They are conservative pragmatists who hate risk and are uncomfortable your new idea. Practically their only driver is the fear of not fitting in, hence they will follow mainstream fashions and established standards. They are often influenced by the fears and opinions of laggards.

**Laggards:** Meanwhile laggards hold out to the bitter end. They are people who see a high risk in adopting a particular product or behaviour. Some of them are so worried they stay awake all night, tossing and turning, thinking up arguments against it. And don't forget they might be right! It's possible they are not really not laggards at all, but innovators of ideas that are so new they challenge your paradigms! In the early stages, where you are focusing on early adopters, you can probably ignore the views of laggards, but when you come to work with late majorities you'll need to address their criticisms, because late majorities share many of their fears.

Each of these adopter personalities is very different. It's vital to know which one you are addressing at a given time. And no, you usually can't address them all at once. Why? Because products and behaviours only mature gradually. The exception is when you have customized quite *different* products or behaviours for each group.

Weight Watchers is an example. It has a traditional calorie-counting method that suits early adopters, a "points value" method that suits early majorities, and a "no count" system for everyone else.

Percentages for each segment:

- Innovators: 2.5%
- Early Adopters: 13.5%
- Early majority: 34%
- Late majority 34%
- Laggards 16%

However the "20:60:20 Rule" is a good all-purpose rule of thumb. When designing a change project you need to know one vital fact: the percentage who have already taken up the innovation. That figure tells you which segment you are addressing *next*. It gives you great insight into how to design your project and how to pitch your communications.