Diffusion of Innovation Theory

How, why, and at what rate new ideas and technology spread.

A visual adaptation of Everett Rogers’ original, developed for the context of creating positive change for the environment.

- **Innovators 2.5%**
  A small number of people willing to take the high risk of adopting a behavior first.

- **Early Adopters 13.5%**
  A slightly larger group that is a bit more selective and require some social proof before adopting the behavior, but are still risk takers.

- **Early Majority 34%**
  This group will wait longer to see if the new behavioral norm “sticks”, let it work out any bugs, and wait to hear what opinion leaders think before adopting.

- **Late Majority 34%**
  This group holds out and waits until nearly everyone else has already adopted, and now it’s become a pain for them not to conform.

- **Laggards 16%**
  Curmudgeons who may never adopt or areas lacking necessary infrastructure.

The time it takes for a behavior to spread varies depending on the size of the community and how easy or difficult it is to adopt the behavior.
Making a change is hard and often creates self-doubt. Help the audience believe in themselves AND guide them through the process. After all, no one wants to look stupid when trying something new.

**COMMUNICATE THE NORM**
Describe the actions or behaviors others are doing when in a similar situation (descriptive norms), or what others are trying to do differently (dynamic norms).

Knowing what other people are doing motivates us to join and instills belief that change is possible.

**INCREASE SELF-EFFICACY (REAL AND PERCEIVED)**
Making a change is hard and often creates self-doubt. Help the audience believe in themselves AND guide them through the process. After all, no one wants to look stupid when trying something new.

**LEVERAGE INFLUENCERS + EARLY ADOPTERS**
The first people trying a new behavior can tell others what their experience was like and why they decided to do it. Peer-to-peer influence is more powerful than any other form of communication.

**SHOW THE DESIRED BEHAVIOR**
Too often we show the problem, but we need to be showing the desired behavior. Show what it looks like; show people doing the action; make it real and possible.

**MAKE IT POPULAR AND SAFE**
Celebrate people doing the behavior and show how it’s become part of their daily life. Make it about joining and belonging to a movement already underway.

**METHODS FOR GROWING A MOVEMENT**
Incorporate these methods into your communication plan to create wider adoption of a new conservation behavior, moving your social change goal closer to social norm status.

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