

Change Management Theories and Models – Everett Rogers

Various schools of thought are accepted about the nature of organisational change and how to most effectively achieve and sustain change. Consider the four change management models set out in each of the sample fact sheets.

Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations

Everett Rogers viewed four elements as influencing diffusion of new ideas through cultures, these being innovations (a new idea, practice or object perceived as new), communication channels (mechanisms for messages to travel), time (influencing decision making and the rate of adoption) and social systems (groups involved in joint problem solving on a common goal).

Rogers viewed the innovation-decision process as occurring over five phases:

- **Knowledge** – represents exposure to the new idea.
- **Persuasion** – the individual is interested in the idea and seeks information/details.
- **Decision** – the individual weighs up the value of the idea and decides whether to adopt or reject it but not necessarily to acquire evidence.
- **Implementation** – the individual takes up the idea at varying rates depending on the situation and may seek out further information.
- **Confirmation** – the individual resolves their decision to continuing the innovation and may use it to maximum use.

Rogers identified five categories of adopters:

- **Innovators** – are the first individuals to adopt and have the following characteristics – risk takers, young, highest social class, financial lucidity, sociable, and closest contact to scientific sources and contact with other innovators.

- **Early adopters** – likely to include more leaders of opinions than other groups, are typically younger, have a higher social status, financial lucidity, more educated, but more discrete in adoption choices than innovators.
- **Early majority** – take longer to adopt new ideas than the previous groups but have above average social status, contact with early adopters and seldom hold opinion leadership in systems.
- **Late majority** – adopt an innovation after the average member of the society and approach innovation with a high degree of scepticism after most of the community has accepted the idea. This group typically have below average social status, low financial lucidity and little opinion leadership.
- **Laggards** – represent the population group last to change, are change adverse and tend to be advanced in years. The group have a focus on traditions, are likely to have the lowest social status and have a limited circle of contacts beyond family and friends.

Rogers identified intrinsic characteristics of innovations influencing decisions to adopt or reject:

- **Relative advantage** – the extent to which the change is viewed as an improvement.
- **Compatibility** – the assessed ease to incorporate the innovation into the individual's life.
- **Degree of complexity** – the perceived complexity to adopt or use.
- **Trialability** – whether there is an opportunity to test or experiment with the innovation.
- **Observability** – whether the innovation will be visible to others and therefore communicated within the individual's contacts towards either positive or negative reactions.