

New Perspectives: Examining, Adapting, Adopting

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Depending on your personality, you might either be the type of person who is very open and willing to try new ideas, methods and practices or you might be one of those people who never want to change anything about how you do things.

It might be helpful to think about how you react to the thought of doing something different or trying something new. Then you can start to think about how you might want to change your responses.

You can also look at the people you work with to see where they fit in. It may help you to know how to approach them when discussing new ideas, practices or methods.

Types of people (from *Diffusion of Innovation* by Everett Rogers)

Innovators: You will try anything new or are driven to find a solution to a specific problem. You are very open to new and different ideas and perspectives. However, you probably should make sure that you have spent enough time considering the idea or method before jumping in and trying it. Otherwise you could find yourself wasting a lot of time on something that you would have known wouldn't work, if you'd just stopped to think about it a little more.

Early Adopters: You are not interested in changing for the sake of change, but you will listen to reason and will apply new ideas or methods as needed if they seem to fit your needs. You are also open to new and different ideas and perspectives. You are careful to examine them but once you've decided they are worth trying, you immediately put them into practice.

Early Majority: You will wait to get evidence that something is worth the effort of change before you will attempt it. After all, if things are working fairly well, there isn't a real need to make changes.

You should be careful to make sure you don't let good ideas pass you by that would end up making the breakthrough you've been waiting for or just making your life a whole lot easier. Make sure to examine new ideas or perspectives and if they could work to your benefit, then take advantage of them and implement them sooner rather than later.

Late Majority: You are skeptical that anything new will really work. You need a lot of reasons to change and good evidence that the change will be worthwhile. You approach anything new very cautiously. You should make a point of being more open and really look at some of the new ideas and perspectives that are available to you. Talk to colleagues about the ideas. New methods or ideas could lead to an exciting new avenue of research or career path that you never thought about before. Make yourself try something different just to see what will happen. It may energize the people you are working with too.

Laggards: You like doing things the way you've always done them. There is no need for change because that usually leads to something disastrous. Besides change just costs money and there's no need to waste money.

Characteristics to test for new idea/method:

When you are faced with a new idea or method, it may help to ask a few questions of yourself as you are considering it:

- Is the idea/method/practice easy to understand, develop, maintain, and/or use? Can you easily explain it to other people? Does it make sense?
- Can the idea/method/practice be tried out on a short-term basis? Can you reverse your decision to use it if needed?
- Will the results of the new idea/method/practice be visible to others so that they can see how it works, what happens with implementation, and offer feedback?
- Is the idea/method/practice better than that it replaces? Is it more cost effective, more convenient, faster, give additional information? Does it make better sense than what you're currently doing?
- Do you have the resources (financial, time, and people) to implement the idea/method/practice?

The more of these features that are present, the more reasonable it is that you should implement the idea or practice.

Professional Atmosphere

In the scientific community, the acquisition and application of new knowledge and practices are very important to success. The scientific culture is supported by constantly bringing in new ideas and people to help members of the group think about their research and how they do it and to develop increased or new skills.

A scientific atmosphere is founded on communicating ideas, shared concerns, and interests. Therefore, to be an effective lab manager, you need to carefully consider ideas from other people, including those with similar and different backgrounds, interests, and experiences than you.

A good atmosphere allows people to disagree and debate the issues. This can result in greater understanding and learning by all the members. "Late adopters" and "laggards" can be challenged in an appropriate way and "innovators" can be made to discuss and defend their ideas. Unfortunately, this can lead to conflict. The environment must be one in which it is strongly insisted that disagreements are resolved through discussion and debate, not hostility.