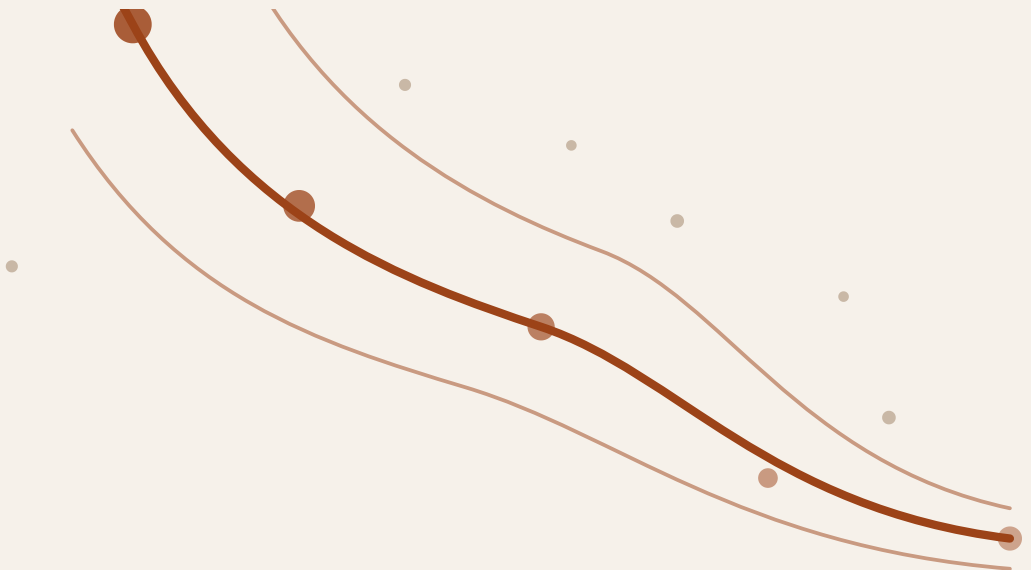


Innovation Management

From scattered initiatives
to a sustained organizational capability

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Chapter 15

Adoption and scaling

With this chapter, the initiative journey reaches its most demanding stage: moving a solution that succeeded in a pilot into broad, real-world use. We examine the gap between adopting an innovation and implementing it, the factors that make some innovations spread faster than others, and the concerns of those who are asked to change, before turning to scaling readiness and the transfer of ownership.

Introduction

Opening case: a Saudi university (composite case)

The center for teaching excellence at a university developed a model for innovation project assignments: students identify a real problem in their field and test a solution to it with actual beneficiaries. The model was piloted in three courses taught by enthusiastic faculty members, and the results were striking: serious projects, high engagement, and students who took their projects on to the business accelerator. Once the results were presented to the university council, a circular was issued requiring the model to be applied in sixty courses the following semester. A year later, the model was “implemented” in every course

on paper: most faculty members had simply renamed their old assignments to match it, and what students actually did had not changed.

The model succeeded when it was adopted by those who chose it, and it faltered when it was imposed on people who had never been consulted and were given neither the time nor the support to understand it. This story recurs across organizations in many forms, and it is our entry point into understanding why the move from limited success to wide use is the hardest stage of the journey.

Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, the reader should be able to:

- 1 Distinguish between adopting an innovation and actually implementing it, and explain the implementation gap.
- 2 Assess the characteristics of an innovation that affect how quickly it is adopted.
- 3 Recognize adopters' stages of concern and provide the support suited to each.
- ε Assess a solution's readiness for scaling, and distinguish between its core, which must be implemented faithfully, and its periphery, which can be adapted.
- 0 Plan the transfer of a solution's ownership and its scaling pathway.

15.1 The implementation gap

The implementation literature distinguishes between the **adoption** of an innovation, that is, the organization's decision to use it, and its **implementation**, that is, its actual and consistent use by the intended people.

Klein and Sorra showed that many innovations are adopted and then never implemented, or are implemented only superficially. In their view, implementation effectiveness depends on two things: the **implementation climate**, meaning the extent to which people perceive that using the innovation is expected, supported and rewarded; and the **innovation’s fit with their values**, meaning the extent to which they see it as consistent with what they believe in their work (Klein & Sorra, 1996). When implementation is expected and required but fit is weak, people comply on the surface without being convinced, which is exactly what happened in the opening case.

Klein and Knight observe that many innovations fail not because they are ineffective, but because they were never implemented with enough quality and consistency for their effectiveness to show (Klein & Knight, 2005). An organization may therefore pronounce a good innovation a failure when, in truth, it never implemented it at all. This is why scaling demands management as careful as that devoted to development.

15.2

Why do some innovations spread faster?

Chapter 1 presented Rogers’s definition of innovation. Among his most important contributions is the identification of five characteristics of an innovation, as perceived by adopters, that explain much of the variation in how quickly innovations are adopted (Rogers, 2003). Table 15.1 sets them out, together with the question each one poses for the scaling team.

Table 15.1 Characteristics of an innovation that affect the speed of its adoption, adapted from Rogers (2003)

Characteristic	Meaning	Design question
Relative advantage	The degree to which people perceive the innovation as better than what they currently use	What does the user personally gain, beyond what the organization gains?

Characteristic	Meaning	Design question
Compatibility	Its consistency with their values, experience, needs and ways of working	What must the user give up in order to adopt it?
Complexity	How difficult it is to understand and use	What is the simplest form in which it can start?
Trialability	Whether it can be tried on a limited scale before commitment	Can users try it without risking much?
Observability	How visible its results are to others	How will others see its results among their colleagues?

These characteristics underline that adoption turns on adopters' *perceptions* of an innovation's attributes. From the center's perspective, the model in the opening case was undoubtedly better; to many faculty members, however, it looked like a complicated additional burden that did not fit courses designed around transmission and testing, and they were given no chance to try it before committing to it. Greenhalgh and colleagues' review extended these characteristics to the context of service organizations, adding factors such as organizational readiness for change and adopters' ability to adapt the innovation to their own context (Greenhalgh et al., 2004).

15.3 The human side of adoption

Where Chapter 7 dealt with the needs of the innovator, this section turns to the needs of those asked to adopt someone else's innovation. Adoption is a change in a person's work, and it raises legitimate questions and concerns. Working in the context of implementing educational innovations, Hall and Hord developed a model of the **stages of concern** that people pass through when asked to adopt an innovation. They showed that these concerns tend to shift

from one level to another, that they may overlap within the same person, and that effective support responds to the stage the person is in (Hall & Hord, 2015). Figure 15.1 presents these stages in grouped form.

Stage	The person's question	Appropriate support
Self Awareness, information and personal impact	What is this? What will change for me? Can I do it?	Clear information, dialogue about the effect on work and time, and honest reassurance
Task Management and execution	How do I organize my time? How do I deal with this practical problem?	Hands-on training, ready-made tools, and close support during implementation
Impact Consequences, collaboration and refocusing	Does this benefit the beneficiaries? How can I improve it?	Data on results, exchange of experience with colleagues, and room for development

Figure 15.1 Adopters' stages of concern grouped into three clusters, with the support appropriate to each, adapted from Hall & Hord (2015).

A common mistake is to address people with impact questions while they are still preoccupied with self questions: presenting the innovation's results and its benefits to the organization while they are asking how it will affect their time, their work and how others see them. In the opening case, faculty members were shown the results of the three courses, but no one asked them about the extra time that supervising real student projects would require, or about the support they would need. Their superficial compliance was therefore less a rejection of the innovation than a response to concerns that no one had answered.

This is consistent with what Chapter 8 said about culture: an administrative circular operates at the level of espoused values, while the faculty member's basic assumption remains that the annual evaluation and promotion do not

count this effort. Changing that assumption is beyond the reach of a circular; it requires culture-embedding mechanisms.

In Practice

Before rolling out an innovation to your colleagues, sit down with five of them who did not take part in the pilot and ask: What worries you most about it? Their answers will tell you which stage of concern they are in, and what support they need before any presentation of results.

15.4 Scaling readiness

Chapter 14 cautioned that a pilot run under ideal conditions says nothing about ordinary conditions. List calls this phenomenon the **voltage effect**: many programs that achieve strong results in their early trials lose much of their impact when they scale. The causes are largely predictable. Among them: the initial result was a false positive; those who took part in the pilot do not represent those who will later use the solution; pilot conditions differ from operating conditions; and costs rise with scale instead of falling (List, 2022).

Most of these causes converged in the opening case: the faculty members teaching the three courses were enthusiasts who had chosen the pilot, whereas those teaching the sixty courses had not; and the three courses enjoyed the center's direct support, which the sixty did not. This is why readiness questions should be asked before scaling: Has the solution been tested under conditions that represent reality? Does it work with people who did not choose it? What does it actually cost without exceptional support? Who will own and operate it?

One of the most important things to settle before scaling is the distinction between a solution's **core** and its **periphery**. Greenhalgh and colleagues' review noted that innovations with a fixed, well-defined core and a flexible, adaptable periphery spread more easily than innovations that are either

entirely rigid or entirely flexible (Greenhalgh et al., 2004). The core is what must remain unchanged for the value to survive; the periphery is what each unit can adapt to its own context. Figure 15.2 illustrates this distinction.

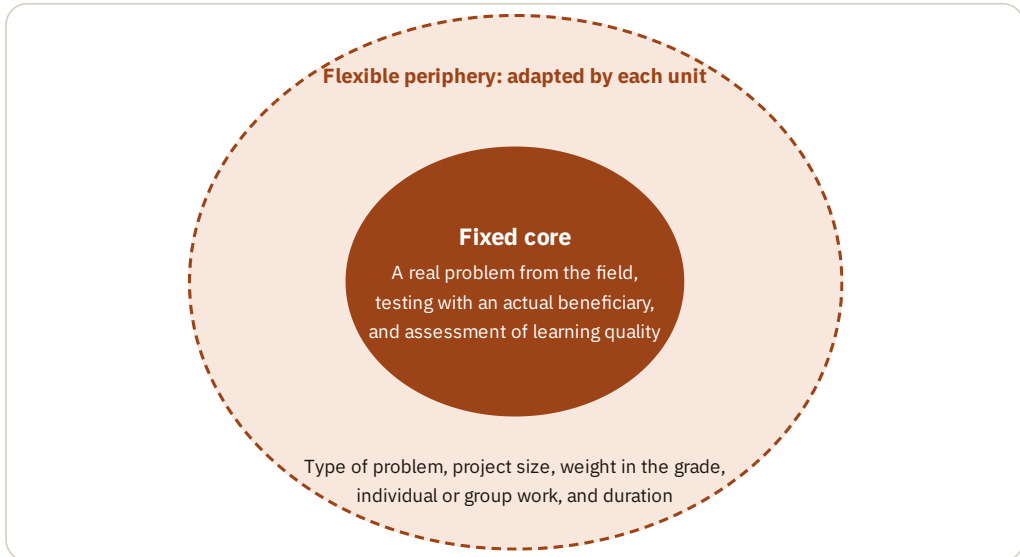


Figure 15.2 The fixed core and flexible periphery of the innovation project assignment model. Developed by the author, drawing on Greenhalgh et al. (2004).

Had the core been defined this clearly in the opening case, each faculty member could have adapted the model to their course without losing its value, and genuine implementation could have been told apart from superficial implementation with a single question: Has the core survived?

15.5

Transferring ownership

It is common in organizations for an innovation team to develop a solution and then “hand it over” to the unit that will operate it, only for that unit not to adopt it. The opening case of Chapter 13 offered one version of this. The reason is that ownership is built during the journey; it is not handed over at the end. Building it requires:

- **Involving the future owner from the start:** a representative of the operating unit should be a member of the team from the pilot stage onward, taking part in decisions and coming to see the solution as an integral part of their own work.
- **Embedding the solution in existing systems:** the budget, procedures, job descriptions and performance indicators. A solution that remains outside these systems remains a temporary project, however long it lasts.
- **Transferring knowledge alongside documentation:** the tacit knowledge the development team has acquired does not travel through written manuals; it requires a period of working together.
- **Defining the innovation team's role after the transfer:** Does it withdraw completely, or does it remain in a supporting role for a set period? And how will later improvements be passed on?

This is why the “operations voice” is one of the five roles on an innovation team, and why “Who will operate it?” is among the questions at the scaling gate.

15.6 Scaling pathways

Scaling takes more forms than a single leap from one unit to the entire organization. Three pathways can be distinguished, differing in speed and risk:

- **Phased scaling:** moving from one unit to a small number of units with different conditions, then to more, learning along the way with each wave. It is the slowest pathway and the least risky.
- **Pull-based scaling:** making the solution available to those who wish to adopt it, with clear support, and making its results visible so that it draws others in. It respects autonomy and builds on observability.
- **Comprehensive scaling:** implementation across the whole organization at once. It suits simple, proven solutions, or those whose nature requires

uniform implementation.

At the university, we propose that embedding innovation in courses begin with a limited number of interdisciplinary courses and then scale through pull and phasing together: the model is offered to interested faculty members with support from the center for teaching excellence, their students' projects are showcased at the annual innovation day, and supervising those projects counts toward the annual evaluation. When other faculty members see the results among their colleagues and find support and recognition, they adopt the model out of conviction. We return to this design in Chapter 20.

Principle

Administrative mandates produce compliance; conviction produces adoption. The quickest route to superficial compliance is to impose an innovation on people who were never consulted and never given what they needed to understand it.

Chapter tool: Scaling readiness check

Answer the following questions before any decision to scale, and give each dimension a rating: ready, partly ready, or not ready. A dimension that is not ready identifies what must be done before or during scaling, without necessarily requiring that scaling be halted.

Chapter tool Scaling readiness check

Dimension	Check question	Rating
Evidence	Has the solution been tested under conditions that represent reality, and with people who did not choose it?	
Core and periphery	Has it been defined what must remain fixed and what can be adapted?	

Dimension	Check question	Rating
Perceived characteristics	Do adopters see its advantage, compatibility and simplicity? And can they try it out?	
Adopters' concerns	Do we know their current concerns? And is support designed around them?	
Implementation climate	Is use of the solution expected, supported and recognized in the formal systems?	
Cost	What is the actual operating cost without exceptional support? And who bears it?	
Ownership	Who owns the solution? Did they take part in developing it? Has it been embedded in their budget and procedures?	
Pathway	Has the appropriate scaling pathway been chosen: phased, pull-based or comprehensive?	
Follow-up	How will we know that implementation is genuine rather than superficial?	

Chapter Summary

- There is a distance between adopting an innovation and implementing it, and implementation effectiveness depends on a climate that supports use and on the innovation's fit with users' values.
- The failure of many innovations owes more to shortfalls in the quality and consistency of their implementation than to any weakness in their effectiveness.

- Adoption is shaped by five characteristics as perceived by adopters: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability and observability.
- Adopters pass through stages of concern, beginning with self, then task, then impact, and effective support responds to the stage the person is in.
- Many programs lose their impact when they scale because pilot conditions were far removed from reality. Defining a fixed core and a flexible periphery helps a solution scale while preserving its value.
- Ownership is built throughout the journey, by involving the future owner and embedding the solution in existing systems.
- Scaling can follow several pathways: phased, pull-based and comprehensive. Administrative mandates produce compliance; conviction produces adoption.

Key Terms

Innovation implementation Innovation implementation	The actual, consistent use of an innovation by its intended users after the decision to adopt it.
Implementation climate Implementation climate	People’s perception that using the innovation is expected, supported and rewarded.
Stages of concern Stages of concern	The progression of adopters’ questions and concerns from self, to task, to impact.
Voltage effect Voltage effect	The decline in a program’s impact as it scales from pilot to wide implementation.

Hard core and soft periphery

Hard core and soft periphery

The distinction between what must remain fixed in an innovation and what can be adapted to each context.

Review and Discussion Questions

- 1 What is the difference between adopting an innovation and implementing it? And why might a good innovation be judged a failure? Understanding
- 2 Assess an innovation you are working to roll out against the five characteristics in Table 15.1, and identify the weakest. Application
- 1 Analyze the opening case using the concepts of stages of concern, the voltage effect and implementation climate. Analysis
- 2 Identify the fixed core and the flexible periphery of an innovation in your organization. Application
- 3 “A formal mandate from leadership is the fastest route to adopting an innovation.” Evaluate this statement. Evaluation

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How does an organization move from scattered initiatives that celebrate innovation to a sustained capability to produce it?

This book traces the path of innovation from the first signal to a solution adopted in practice that creates value, and analyzes the organizational foundations that make this path a settled practice: strategy, systems, culture, governance, teams and measurement, with people at the center.

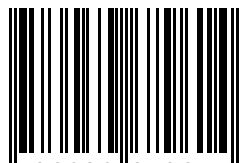
It rests on three pillars: a clear, high-priority problem; motivated people whose needs are met; and a system that connects them and turns effort into repeatable results. It combines international research evidence with the Saudi context, and pairs each chapter with a tool that can be used in a real organization.

Its twenty chapters are organized in five parts: foundations; institutional foundations and people; the initiative journey; value and the ecosystem; and an application to the university innovation ecosystem.

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