



The **Bathwick** Group

Introducing the Adoption Train:

a tool for controlling the hype cycle

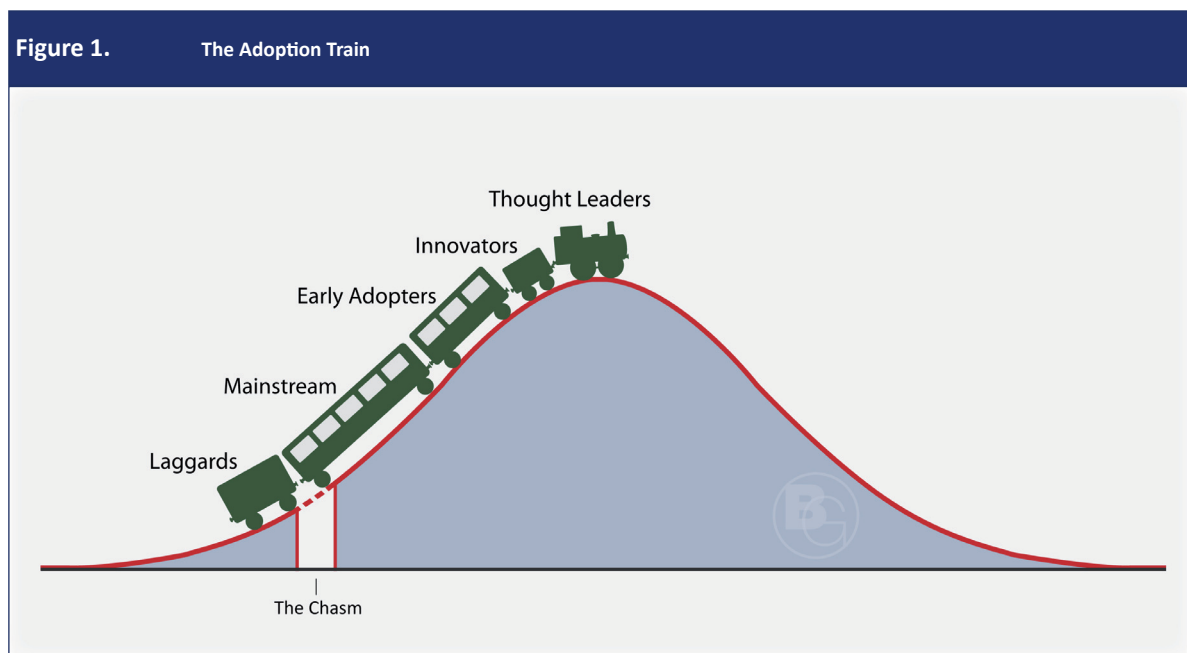
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Introduction

For nearly two decades, the technology industry has used the technology adoption lifecycle (TAL) as a means to model and understand the way new technologies or products should be brought to market. We believe that the ways in which the TAL model is used are flawed; this paper introduces a new way to view the technology adoption lifecycle, adding additional dimensions that make it possible to model different classes of adopter, and consequently making it easier to market to them.

The Adoption Train

If instead of treating “adopters” as a single group, you split them into 5 separate classes of adopter, you end up with an “adoption train”, since each group is likely to be in a different position on the adoption curve:



In figure 1 above, the thought leaders are entering what would traditionally have been described as the “Late Majority” – in this context, there is broad agreement between thought leaders that this technology is no longer controversial - indeed some thought leaders will have already defected by this time in order to find a more “interesting” technology to promote.

At the same time as this technology is starting to appear passé to thought leaders – there are still some laggards who haven’t even heard of it.

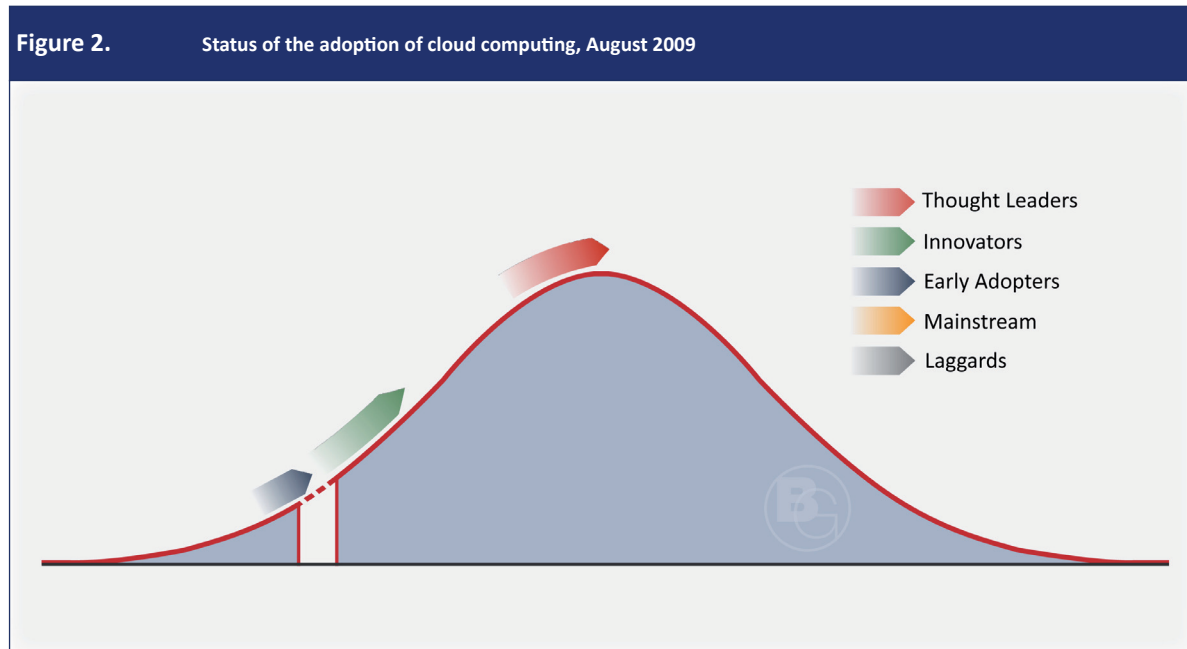
There are a number of elements to the “train” that are meaningful, the first of which we’ve just alluded to – its length.

A long adoption train creates a challenge for marketers

A long train creates a challenge for marketers, as they have to deliver marketing (messaging, evangelism and collateral) to a broader range of needs and wants. In the example above, the laggards are still asking “what is this?”, the mainstreamers are looking for real-world case studies and help with the business case, the early adopters want help understanding the technology, and the thought leaders need to be convinced that the technology isn’t becoming boring.

There is also the idea that the links between the groups are important in ensuring that the momentum of the whole train isn't disrupted – If the thought leaders get too far ahead of the innovators there's a real danger that the coupling will break and the remainder of the train will simply lose momentum leading to the real danger that it will either fail to cross or fall in to the chasm.

In figure 2 below, we've simplified the icons somewhat, but we've maintained the concept that there are 5 groups of adopters, although in this case, only the first three actually appear on the TAL.



This is an early draft of our cloud computing adoption model, it contains a number of warnings for vendors.

The cloud computing train is in danger of dividing

In the case of cloud computing, the thought leaders are far ahead of actual adopters in terms of their thinking about and discussion of cloud computing. Indeed our analysis suggests that some of the “thought leadership” that is taking place around cloud is actually alienating potential adopters, rather than encouraging them. The length of both the thought leader and innovator components also implies a warning – there is still a lot of disagreement within these groups about the role, purpose and ultimate direction of cloud computing.

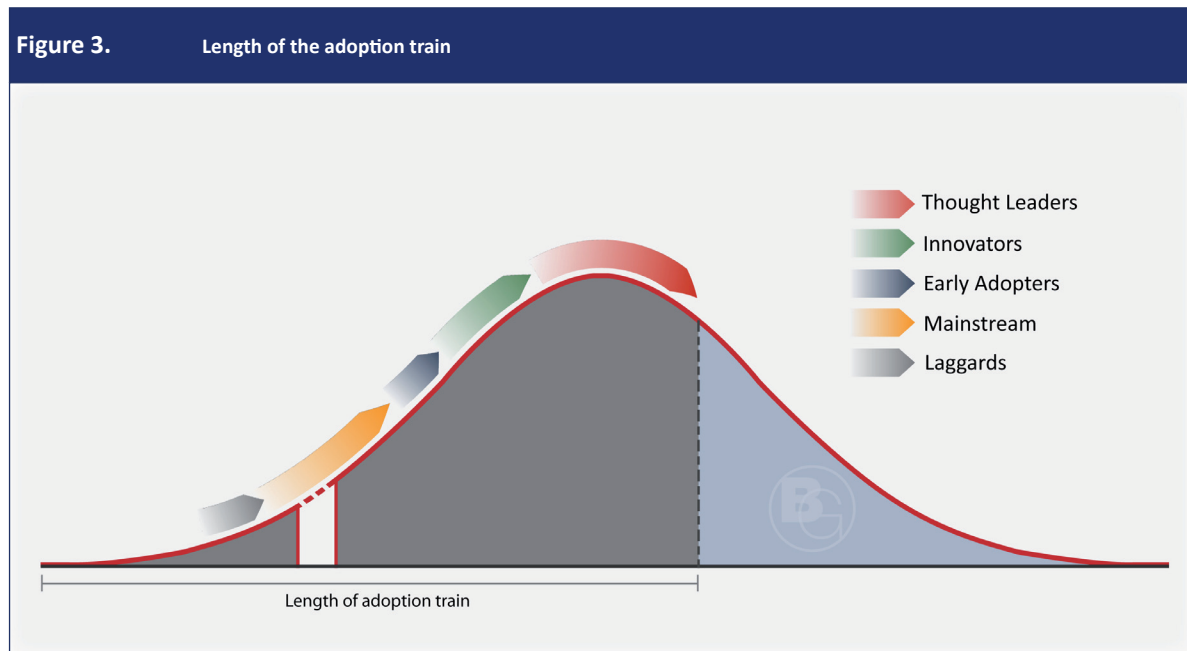
Looking at the next group, there are indeed some innovators, but it is still early – vendors should be focussing on groups/clusters of potential adopters and engaging with them to look at which elements of the cloud computing story chime most.

Very few mainstream organisations are even close to adopting cloud, and without a more coherent story at the front of the train, there's a real danger that they will simply not make it across the chasm.

So what now?

The Adoption Train model helps visually describe the current state of a technology's adoption. The key in using the model lies in doing the necessary analysis in order to fashion the shape and size of the adoption train, and then in understanding what you should do with this graphical description.

By establishing the composition of the adoption train, you can determine the current state, and relative size of the different types of adopter group. Once you've done this, you can begin to market effectively to the adoption train.



In figure 3 above, it's clear that the train is relatively long – This means that marketers have to maintain the interest of the thought leaders, while driving the mainstream further up the adoption curve.

How can The Bathwick Group help?

As the originators of the Adoption Train model, we've naturally done a lot of thinking about it, not least around how it can be applied to help our clients better control the hype-cycle.

We've developed an approach that uses the model as a tool to determine the effectiveness of an organisation's current marketing strategy, and to identify improvements that could be made to it.

What are the benefits of applying the Adoption Train model to your marketing strategy?

We believe that by looking at adoption in these terms, you'll be able to derive the following benefits:

- A better understanding of the way in which your technology is being adopted
- Clearer knowledge of the types of marketing you should be directing at the different component groups of the adoption train
- A marketing strategy that focuses marketing spend much more closely on revenue generating constituencies
- Improved mapping between your marketing collateral/programs and the audiences for them.

If you'd like to see a copy of our more detailed white paper on this topic, please contact Gary Barnett - gary@bathwick.com

About The Bathwick Group

The Bathwick Group researches how businesses actually buy and apply IT to their business, how they innovate using technology, and how IT is supporting changes in market and organisational models. Specific areas of focus include dynamic infrastructure, IT services, smart information, collaboration and sustainability.

Much of Bathwick's insight is based on extensive up-to-the-minute data from end users, which results from online benchmarking and IT assessment activities. All such activity is based on Bathwick's own componentised applications and hosted web services, and provides an ever-growing feed of customer data from most leading countries around the world. We combine that data and primary research activity with economic and contextual analysis in enterprise, mid-market and small business sectors to give us unique insights into how an ICT-enabled world is developing.

We offer ICT vendor clients a range of products including research models, sales-enablement tools, market analysis, and strategic planning consultancy, and works with clients in both private and public sectors that are planning for technology-driven change.

The Bathwick Group also includes:

- **Bathwick Press LLP**, which publishes books designed to help business leaders gain insight into how IT can help to change and drive value in their organisations
- **The ThinkAgain Partnership LLP**, global collaborative research network, which brings together academics, writers, business and political leaders to generate new insights into business productivity and performance, geo-political and environmental issues



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