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Beat the Hype Cycle:

**Get people to use the web presentation tools you've
paid for**

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Date

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Introduction

What is the Hype Cycle and Why Should You Care?

“We bought a web presentation platform but no one is using it- we’re wasting money”

“We have moved a lot of our meetings online to save budget but they’re not productive”

“We rolled out the platform company wide but we’re getting a lot of pushback”

If you’re hearing these complaints inside your company, you’re not alone. Millions of dollars are wasted each year in communication solutions that are badly used, under-used or just plain resisted in the hopes that “this too shall pass” like so many initiatives before it.

It’s not uncommon. You’re in the grips of “the Hype Cycle”. It’s common—and can be overcome.

Here’s how.

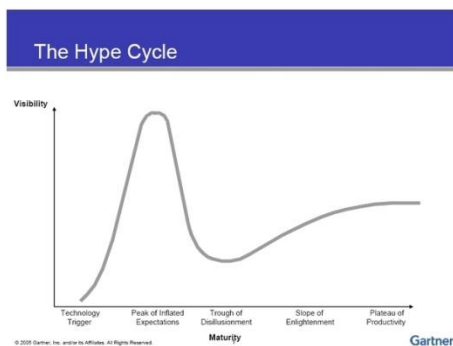
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See if this sounds familiar:

- **After intense scrutiny, your company settles on a technology solution. In this case, a web presentation platform like WebEx, Dimdim or Adobe Connect.**
- **You roll it out with much fanfare and lots of online resources.**
- **A few people use it immediately, most don't and more often than not adoption is far less than expected.**

That's the "Hype Cycle" in action.

The term "Hype Cycle" was first coined in 1995 by the Gartner Group to explain why people didn't immediately adopt the technology companies invested in. Here's a graphic representation of what it looks like:



High expectations, lower than expected utilization and a gradual acceptance at about 50% of expectations is the norm.

Remember that this is the average. In some cases people will come around (email adoption is universal in most

companies. How well they use it is another question for another day). Sometimes efforts just die on the vine. Over 60% of IT rollouts eventually fail so it's not unusual. What's the problem?

If you look at the Hype Cycle, there are 5 stages:

The Technology Trigger- someone decides a new tool will solve the problem."Let's cut our travel budget and use webmeetings for sales calls and webinars for training"

The Peak of Inflated Expectations- "If we can do 50% of our meetings online we can save millions of dollars. We just need our 200 managers to make the switch. Let's roll it out!"

The Trough of Disillusionment- A few managers jump on the bandwagon. Most don't, and those that do are disappointed with the results. Utilization rates are far below expectations.

The Slope of Enlightenment- Eventually people start to do webmeetings. Most are forced into it, some see the advantages. Best practices emerge and people learn (often through trial and error) what works and what doesn't. The more gradual the slope, the more money is wasted in unused tech and lost productivity.

Plateau of Productivity- Eventually you wind up with some percentage of people using the tool. Some use it well, others use it poorly but they use it. Here's where the return on your investment is often measured. The higher the plateau, the more successful the rollout.

The problem with most technology rollouts is that the expectations are high, the trough

of disillusion is too low and it takes too long to reach the plateau of productivity.

The reason is as old as mankind, and it has to do with how we naturally take to any technology, web meetings or hybrid corn.

The Adoption Cycle for Technology

In the 1950s, researchers wondered why some farmers adopted new tools right away and others never did, even when evidence proved that the new tool or technique got better results.

What they discovered became known as “the Adoption Cycle”. While there’s a world of difference between seed corn and video conferencing, the cycle remains untouched.

Basically, human beings fall into five categories when it comes to technology or tools:

Innovators- The first ones to hear about something. Being first is important to their egos as well as their careers. Think of the people who line up outside the Apple store on launch day. ($\pm 7\%$ of the population)

Early Adopters- They hear about something, check with a couple of trusted sources (usually outside the company) but often lead the pack. They like to start small and show proof of concept. (10% of your people)

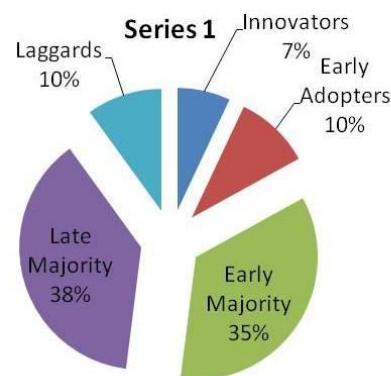
Early Majority- See the benefits of the tech and, as soon as they have

proof of concept, get with the program. (35% or so)

Late Majority- Nobody will ever accuse them of being trendsetters, but they eventually get onboard. It can take a while, though. ($\pm 38\%$)

Laggards- Nothing short of an act of Congress will get them to use something different than what they’ve been using for years. Maybe it’s technophobia, maybe it’s orneriness but you have your work cut out for you with these folks. (they’re the last remaining 10% or so).

The Adoption Cycle



What does the Adoption Cycle have to do with the Hype Cycle?

If you think about the Hype Cycle, the initial euphoria is followed by a steep drop in the people who actually use it right away. This isn’t surprising if only 7% of your people are inclined to be the first onboard.

Then consider 10% of your folks won’t ever really use the new tool. This means if you’re going to get people to adopt a tool quickly, you have to appeal to your Early Adopters and speed up the Early and Late Majority.

What makes people accept or resist technology? There is a lot of research out

there, but if you think of your own experience as a consumer you'll recognize the most obvious factors.

- **Does it solve a pressing problem?** I have a lot going on. If the way things are working now is okay, why change?
- **Have I seen it modeled in action?** The only webinars I've ever been on have been glitchy and boring. Seems like a lot of work for poor results. Why would I want to do one myself?
- **Is it easy to use?** There's a lot of multitasking to running a webmeeting. Maybe I'll just send out the PowerPoint files in an email and walk through it on the phone.
- **How much time will it take to learn and will there be training?** Over 90% of vendors have online resources and tutorials available. Fewer than 10% of companies have live, instructor-led training and even fewer offer hands-on coaching and practice.
- **Who else is using it and how's it going for them?** The innovators are looked on as geeks and oddballs. The real influencers are the Early Adopters. How's it going for them? Are you hearing good or bad stories?
- **Is it cheap/available/handy?** Anything that needs a separate log-in, a new

password and permission from the budget holder is more trouble than it's worth. It's worth noting that with new suites of integrated solutions like Office Communicator this is less of an issue in some companies than others.

How one client overcame the Hype-Adoption Cycles and got results.

A large internet consulting and web design company (they're real, but shy about using their name) paid approximately \$20,000 for a web presentation platform and licenses. Their consultants build websites, and need to consult with their clients throughout the project: demonstrating new features, getting input and maintaining the relationship.

They also planned to use the tool for internal training, marketing and sales but wanted to start with the consultant/designers.

After going through the traditional bid process, IT settled on a well-known platform provider and made a big announcement. Essentially they said (and we're paraphrasing): "we now have this platform, watch the online videos to learn how it's done, don't hurt anyone".

The results were precisely in line with the adoption and hype cycles.

A few Innovators jumped on the bandwagon right away, with mixed results. The Early Adopters were split, but after some initial excitement many just gave up. The majority of people, taking their cues from the Early Adopters just didn't bother or used it sparingly, and the Laggards basically said, "told ya so".

An internal survey looked like this after 5 months of use:

- ±10% of those using the tool considered themselves enthusiastic users
- 30% identified themselves as “reluctant users”
- 35% said they hadn’t used it yet but were planning to.... someday....maybe
- 25% of the intended audience either had no intention of ever using the tool or were actively avoiding the use of it.

Their Solution: Rethink the rollout, start small and offer real training.

The team at GreatWebMeetings.com was proud to work with this client on the solution. After doing a [Web Presentation Readiness Assessment](#), we found out why people weren’t using this perfectly good tool.

The top 4 reasons people gave for not using the presentation platform were:

1. The tool was “more trouble than it’s worth”
2. They feared the technology (having been on too many that had technical issues)
3. They hate webmeetings and webinars and weren’t motivated to run one themselves. (Usually boring and too long)
4. The online training wasn’t in line with the way they wanted to learn.(It was available but couldn’t answer their questions in real time or

let them get their hands on the equipment and practice for themselves).

The cure for technology concerns is seldom more technology.

After working with us on a plan, the client conducted a second roll-out to a small group of influencers. This included, not only the Innovators, but hand-picked Early Adopters.

Using GreatWebMeetings.com’s [Web Presentation Basics Program](#), the pilot group received webinar-delivered, live instructor-led training. This 2-part program included:

- Using the client’s platform so that learning was applicable immediately
- Modeling use of all the relevant features including chat, polling, annotation tools, white board and application sharing to demonstrate the capabilities and application of these tools in their work environment
- Small groups to allow for live discussion and lots of questions
- Small group presentations where each participant delivered a presentation using the tools and got live real-time coaching from peers and the instructor

The results were impressive and somewhat surprising. This reluctant group of designers were actually hungry for the training, even though only a handful had even looked at the online tutorials.

In fact, before the second part of the pilot course was completed, there was already demand for another session. The pilot course turned into 6 sessions in total. Attendance in all but the pilot programs was voluntary and the programs were packed.

Level one surveys revealed some interesting feedback that showed why adoptions was so slow in the first place:

- What people found most valuable was the modeling of the tool by someone who knew what they were doing. Most had never seen a professionally run webmeeting using all the features. Simply put, they didn't even realize everything they could do with the tool. This inspired them to use it with their customers and teams.
- Hands-on practice with coaching was incredibly valuable. People felt much more comfortable trying the platform tools without the pressure of a "real" audience.
- Seeing their peers use the tool gave them tips and best practices they could use with their own teams and customers. People couldn't wait to try it in the real world.

After the training, the number of people using the tool, and using it well, jumped dramatically. When we went back to survey the group, most had used it several times and were developing confidence. Specifically, here's what happened to those stuck in the "trough of disappointment":

The number of "enthusiastic users" went from 20 to 30%.
The number of users who called themselves "reluctant users" dropped

from 40% to less than 30%. This meant more people were using the tool, saving money on travel and returning value on the investment in the platform.

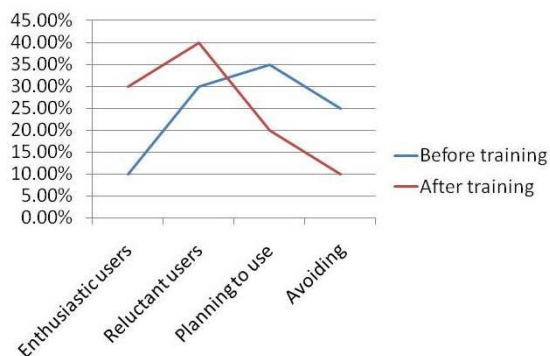
The people who were "planning to use the tool soon" skyrocketed from 20% to 35%. Keep in mind more people were already using it so some of the Late Majority became Early Majority users.

The Laggards who had avoided using the tool or even thinking about it dropped to 10% from over 25%.

To sum up the results: by offering hands-on practice and small-group instruction in the proper use and application of the tool, they radically increased the adoption rate and raised the "plateau of productivity" well above 50% in a short period of time.

Now they had people using the tool the company adopted, saving time and increasing the quality of the customer and internal communication.

Typical Client Results



Summary

These results are not unusual. You can reduce the negative impact of the Hype

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Cycle and speed up the Adoption cycle by keeping these tips in mind:

- Roll out technology like web presentation tools to small groups first. Focus on your influential Innovators and respected Early Adopters. Let them get excited and tell their peers.
- Use success stories to excite Early Adopters and Early Majority folks. Share them with the whole group.
- Offer live, hands-on training that models how they'll use these tools in the real world and allows them to practice in a safe environment.
- Make training available to everyone on a "just in time" basis. They should learn, practice and apply the learning in short order.
- Trumpet successes to turn Late Majority people into excited users.

Find out how GreatWebMeetings.com can help you beat the Hype Cycle and get your people using the tools you've invested in.

GreatWebMeetings.com is an industry leader in using web presentation tools to present, sell and lead their teams.

We don't sell the technology- we teach the presentation, facilitation and communication skills to create the human connections that drive business results.

Our president, Wayne Turmel is the author of several books including ["6 Weeks to a Great Webinar- Generate Leads and Tell Your Story to the World"](#) and ["10 Steps to Successful Virtual Presentations"](#). He's also the ["Connected Manager" blogger for BNET.com](#) and a respected speaker and writer on the subject of web presentations and remote team communication.

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